"YOU MUST CHECK IT OUT!" J.J. ABRAMS

ELEPHANTMEN!™

APPROVED BY THE COMICRAFT AUTHORITY

2260 BOOK FIVE

"UP CLOSE & PERSONAL"

STARKINGS · MEDELLIN · PEDRO · ROSHELL · COOK

Image Comics presents:

ELEPHANTMEN

STARKINGS • MEDELLIN • PEDRO • COOK

22 CB

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL

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ELEPHANTMEN: 2260 VOLUME 5: UP CLOSE & PERSONAL.
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El·e·phant·men [el-*uh*-*fuhnt*-men] noun:
1. Transgenics; human/animal hybrids, genetically engineered by the **MAPPO Corporation** for military deployment in the **Afro-Sino War** (2239-2243). Rehabilitated by the **United Nations**, these creatures were gradually inculcated into human society.
2. Derogatory term for such.

ELEPHANTMEN

It's a mystery to me.

LOS ANGELES 2260

Ten Years of Rain in Los Angeles and people still say "Welcome to Sunny California!"

Ten Years.

That's a LOT of rain.

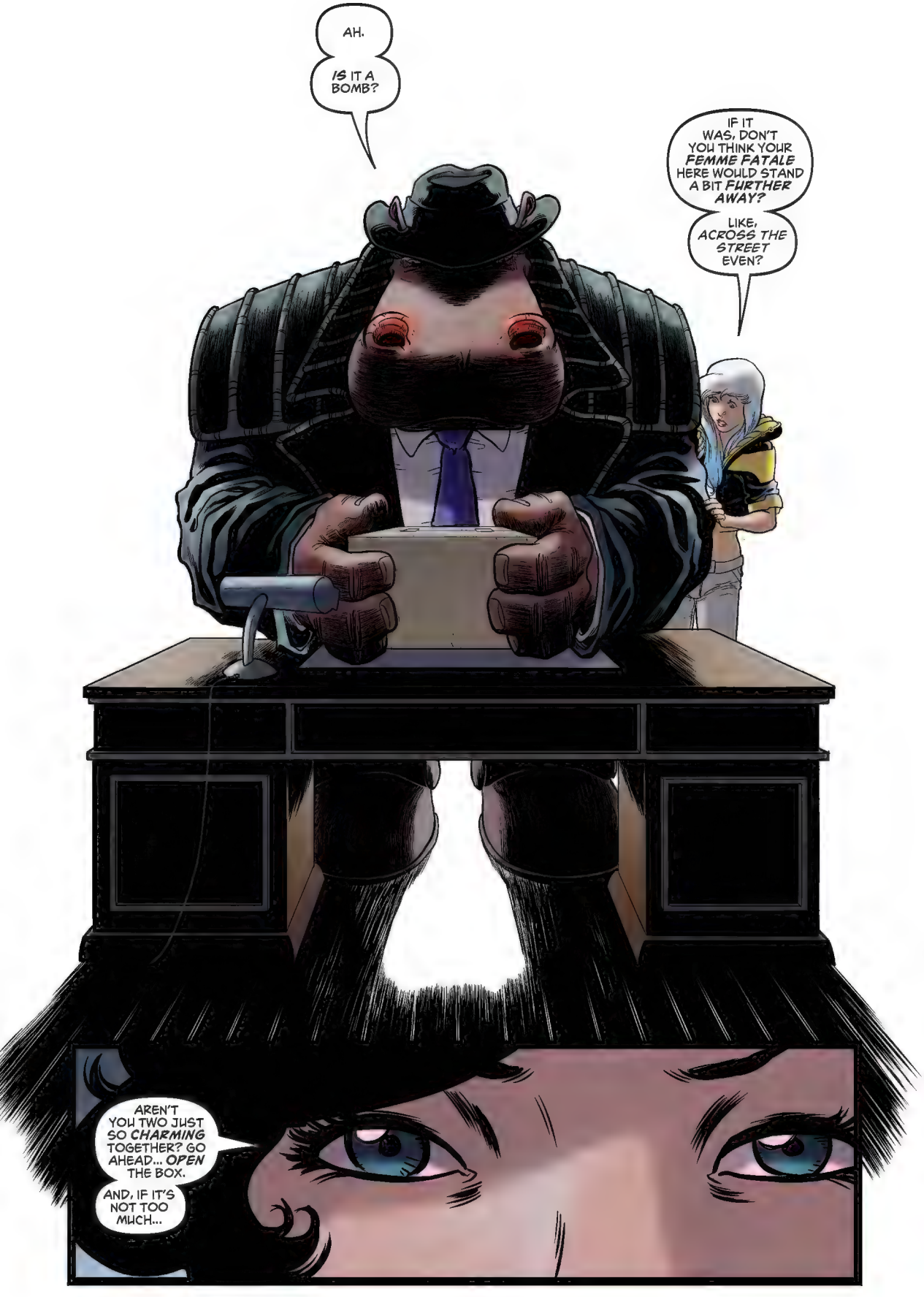
Too Much and Not Enough.
The City is a Desert, after all.
But seriously, would a LITTLE Ray of Sunshine be too much to ask for?
Anyways, I got an urgent call from someone claiming to be a friend of Jack Farrell's...
No one would call Jack Farrell a ray of sunshine. 'Cept maybe his MOTHER.
And then only when he pays her rent.
JACK FARRELL
PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS
Even so, he's earned my respect. When things got a little crazy for Ebony and me and the rest of the Elephantmen, he stood by us.
I can count the other men who would do that on the fingers of one hand.
And yeah, I know, I only have THREE fingers on each hand.

The
WHITE ELEPHANT
Part One of Two
Ya'd think NIKKEN and his crack team of GENETICISTS would have caught that after the first few transgenics were born, wouldn't ya?
Seems like it's always the LITTLE MEN who think SIZE is so important.
Richard Starkings Words
Carlos Pedro Art
Axel Medellin Color Art
Dave Johnson Cover Art

Little men... and INTERESTING WOMEN.
I don't think I've met this one before.
YOU MUST BE HIERONYMOUS FLASK.
WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
Probably not Farrell's SISTER.
after Tim Sale

OH YEAH? YA NEED A THIRD PERSON FOR A DECENT GAME OF *SCRABBLE?*
YOU WANT ME TA TELL JACK THAT *CRAPSNACKS* ISN'T IN THE DICTIONARY?
YOU'RE FUNNY.
I WONDER IF YOU CAN KEEP ME ENTERTAINED FOR LONGER THAN *FIVE MINUTES.*
PLEASE...
NO NEED TO KEEP WAVING THAT GUN AROUND, TOOTS.
I'LL SIT FOR COFFEE WITH YOU, SURE, BUT I'M NOT GONNA EAT ANY OF FARRELL'S SANDWICHES.
NOT EVEN IF YOU *SHOOT* ME.
THERE *ARE* FATES *WORSE* THAN DEATH, YA KNOW?
HUH?
VANITY?
HIP!
BOY, AM I GLAD TO SEE *YOU!*
Now THERE is a Ray of Sunshine. VANITY CASE, Information Agent and adorability in human form.
A Special Package.

And a package.
Special Delivery.
ANY IDEA WHAT MIGHT BE IN THIS BOX?
YOUR LADY FRIEND THERE SEEMS VERY INTERESTED IN WHATEVER IT CONTAINS.
NO IDEA.
BUT I'M GUESSING THIS IS WHY WE'RE BEING HELD AT GUNPOINT.
AND YOU'D BE RIGHT. SO VERY CAREFULLY, I'D LIKE YOU TO START UNWRAPPING IT.
SO CAREFULLY, YOU MIGHT EVEN THINK IT'S A BOMB...


AH.
IS IT A BOMB?
IF IT WAS, DON'T YOU THINK YOUR FEMME FATALE HERE WOULD STAND A BIT FURTHER AWAY?
LIKE, ACROSS THE STREET EVEN?
AREN'T YOU TWO JUST SO CHARMING TOGETHER? GO AHEAD... OPEN THE BOX.
AND, IF IT'S NOT TOO MUCH...

"CAN WE HAVE A LITTLE SILENCE, PLEASE?"
JACK FARRELL
PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS
SCHRRPP
SCHRUFFT

HUNH. WILLYA LOOK AT THAT?
STAND BACK, LET ME SEE...
LET ME TOUCH IT...
WHITE GOLD! WELL, THIS IS AN ADDED BONUS...

"NOT WHAT I WAS EXPECTING AT ALL..."
PFFT!
KRKT
WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE GOOD MUD--?!
YIKES!
NOW THAT I WAS EXPECTING, AND THAT'S WHY I NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT SLIPPING ON A BODY-HUGGING FORCEFIELD.
GET DOWN! A SECOND SHOT COULD--
I DON'T THINK THAT WILL BE NECESSARY. I JUST NEEDED TO KNOW WHERE OUR SNIPER WAS LOCATED...
SHIT!

*See ELEPHANTMEN #16, 36-39

SHE'S THE SMART ONE. I KINDA FORGOT THAT...
BUT I'M ALWAYS PREPARED FOR SURPRISES.
TK
TK
TK
TK
INSERT

OH MY GOD... NO... NO, NO, NO NO, NO...
THIS GUY AVOIDED THE POLICE AND THE INFORMATION AGENCY FOR MONTHS...
WHAT WERE YA THINKING?
HE'S COMING FOR ME! *PLEASE!* YOU HAVE TO *PROTECT* ME!
I HAVE TO PROTECT *YOU*?! UM, CAN YOU RUN THAT PAST ME AGAIN?

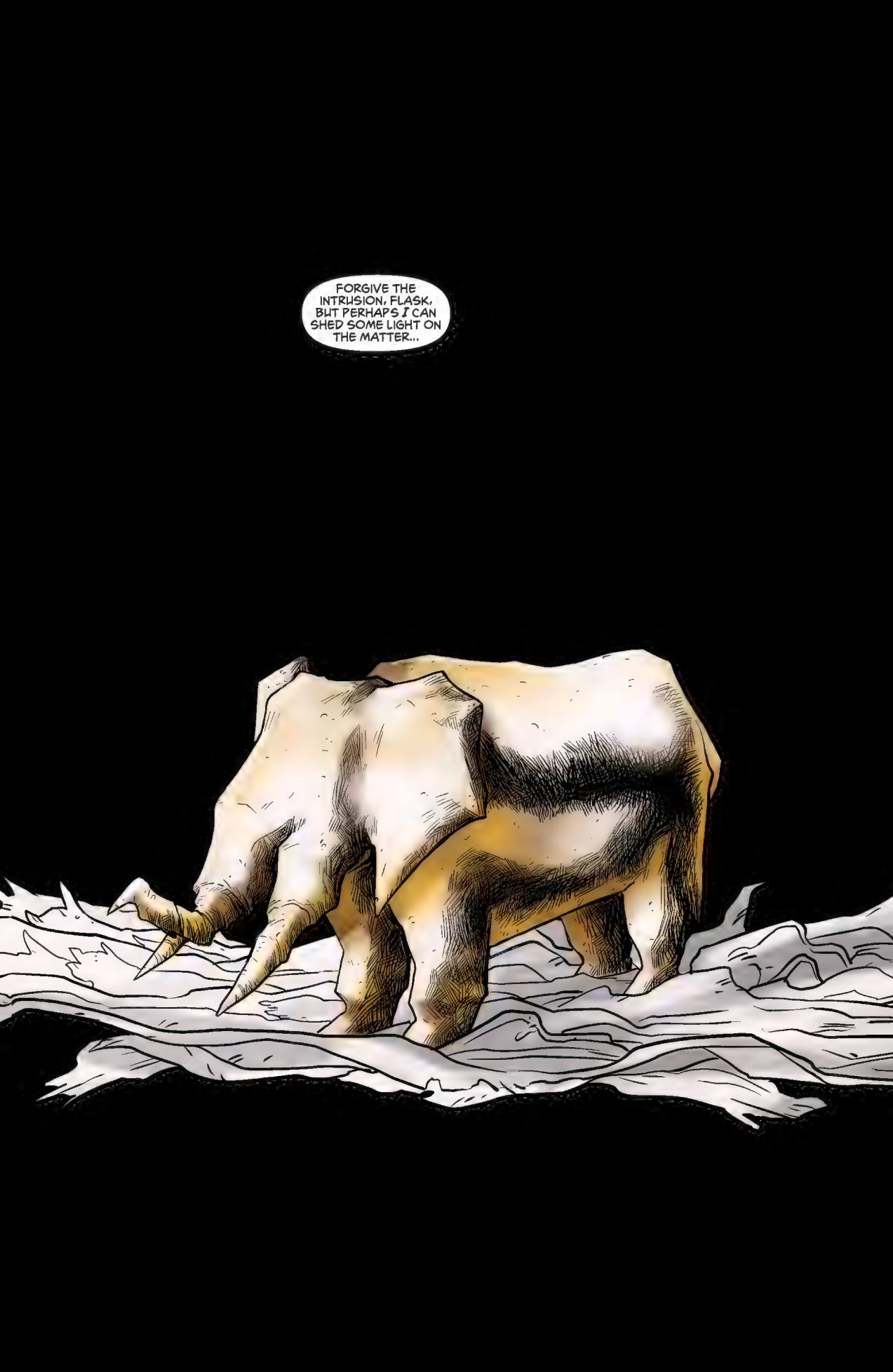
THIS MAN USED TO OPERATE OUT OF THESE OFFICES. HE WORKED FOR MY BROTHER, FOR THE MOB IN NEW YORK.
HE'S A STONE-COLD KILLER. A GUN FOR HIRE. PROBABLY THE BEST ASSASSIN OUT THERE.
"HE KILLED RHAPSODY, MY SISTER-IN-LAW...
"HE CUT OFF THE TONGUE OF MY NIECE, HARMONY...
"I BELIEVE HE ALSO KILLED MY BROTHER, THE MAN WHO HAD SAVED HIS MISERABLE LIFE...*
*See ELEPHANTMEN #40
"AND HE KILLED THE WOMAN WHO LOVED HIM MY OTHER NIECE, DESTINY."*
*See ELEPHANTMEN #16
I'M SORRY, FAMILIES CAN BE SO EMBARRASSING, CAN'T THEY?

THE RIVER KILLER. If she's right, then we're ALL in trouble. This guy hasn't just been killing her family members. He put over a HUNDRED Elephantmen in bodybags and dumped them in the L.A River.
Every time we got close to tracking him down, he disappeared like some kind of GHOST.

So what was he doing HERE, in Farrell's offices...? And what's with The White Elephant?
It's these kinda questions that make me miss THE HYENAS FROM MARS.
At least I could PUNCH their ugly mugs.
I BEG OF YOU, HELP ME... OR HE'LL KILL ME!
Miki says I'm a sucker for a Damsel in Distress, but I make exceptions if they're holding a gun on me...
THE WAY I SEE IT, YOU'RE SITTING PRETTY WITH YOUR FORCEFIELD THINGY AND ME AND VANITY ARE THE ONLY ONES IN TROUBLE HERE.
IT WON'T HELP ME AT CLOSE RANGE...
THAT SUCKS.
WAS IT ON SALE?

WHUNCH
HIERONYMOUS FLASK, INFORMATION AGENT... I SUGGEST YOU LOWER YOUR WEAPON RIGHT NOW.
VANITY CASE. DITTO.

GO AHEAD, SHOOT... MAYBE WHEN I PULL THE TRIGGER I'LL ONLY BLOW YOUR BRAINS OUT...
YOU'RE NOT IMPORTANT TO ME, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
YOU... DON'T KNOW ME...?
I'M HERE FOR THE PACKAGE.
YOU CHUMPS JUST HAPPEN TO BE IN MY WAY.
THAT'S IT? THE ELEPHANT? WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT IT?


FORGIVE THE INTRUSION, FLASK, BUT PERHAPS I CAN SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE MATTER...

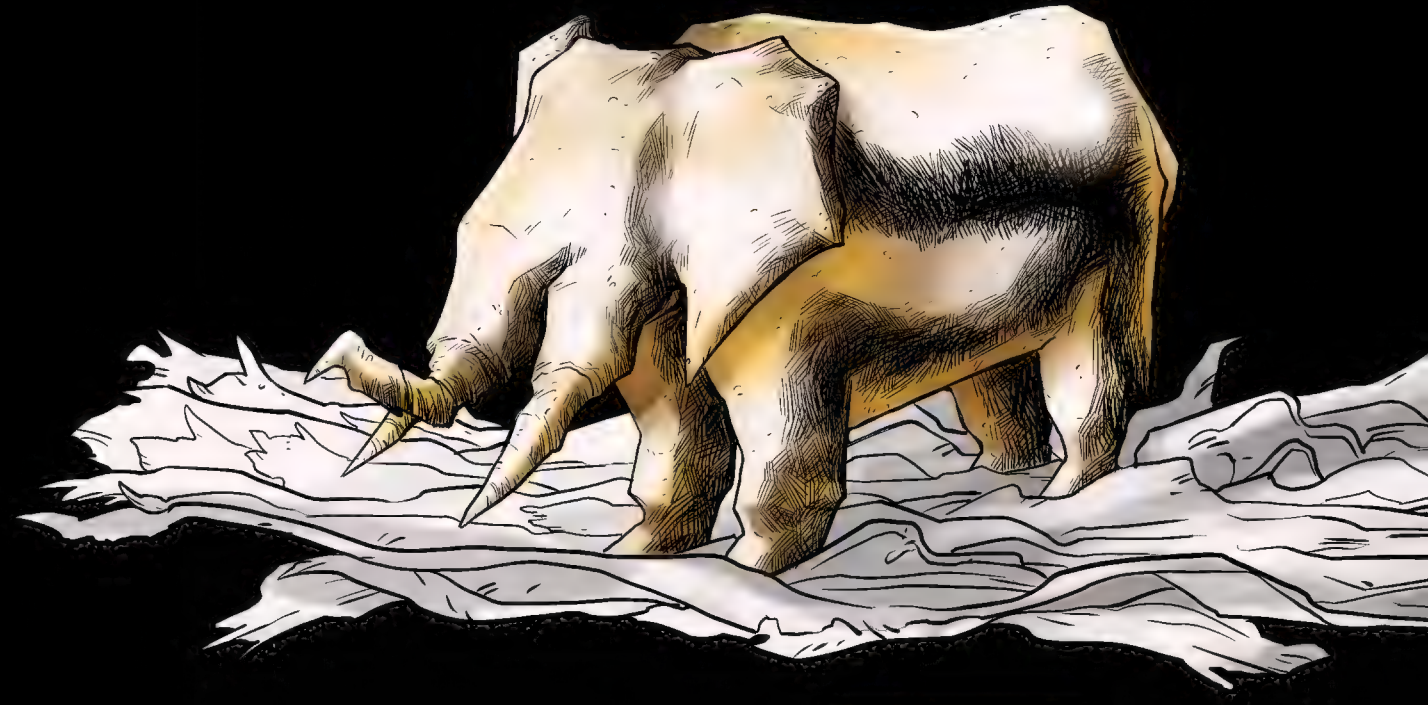
THE ELEPHANT BELONGS TO *ME*.
To Be Continued!

2
SKYLAB
PANOSIAN

The WHITE ELEPHANT

Part Two of Two

It's pretty, all right.



Solid GOLD, I'm sure.

Richard Starkings Words • Carlos Pedro Art
Axel Medellin Color Art • Dan Panosian Cover Art

And wherever there's GOLD, seems to me there's always a whole BUNCH of FOOLS ready and willing to FIGHT over it.

Not my colleague VANITY CASE, she may have a HEART of Gold, but butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. She's still just a Girl.

As for the DAME in the Red Dress holding the PEASHOOTER, I figure she's been around Gold her whole life and holds it in higher estimation than she holds HERSELF.

After all, if you're willing to risk a SHOT IN THE HEAD from a man who already tried to KILL her a few minutes ago -- a man she claims killed most of her FAMILY and at least a hundred and fifty ELEPHANTMEN -- I'd say she's not CAPABLE of thinking straight.

And as for OBADIAH HORN, Wall Street and MAPPO's poster boy, I bet he could buy a THOUSAND trinkets just like this one, so he's not here for the money, it has to be for something else.

On any other day, Horn would have had his goons KILL everyone here in the room before he even THOUGHT about stepping into it. But not today. Not since his WEDDING turned into a MASSACRE. He's been under close scrutiny ever since then.

Probably doesn't hurt that both Vanity and me work for THE INFORMATION AGENCY. Killing government employees wouldn't look good on his resume.

OBADIAH.

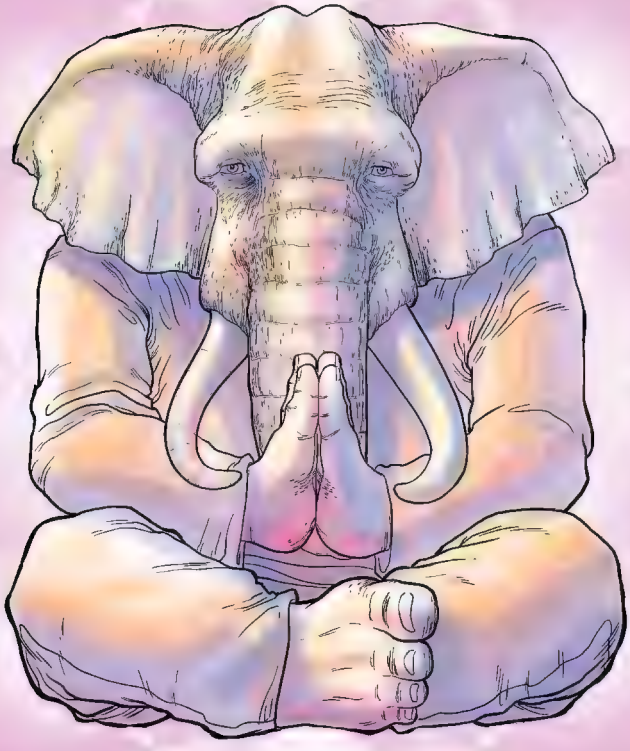
HIERONYMOUS.

And, of course, we have HISTORY.

I'm not talking about THE WAR. That's like, ANCIENT history.

This is totally RECENT history. That WEDDING. The Massacre.

GABBATHA. One of our own. A WHITE Elephant in every sense. Pure of Heart, Noble in Deed. Always SAVING lives.



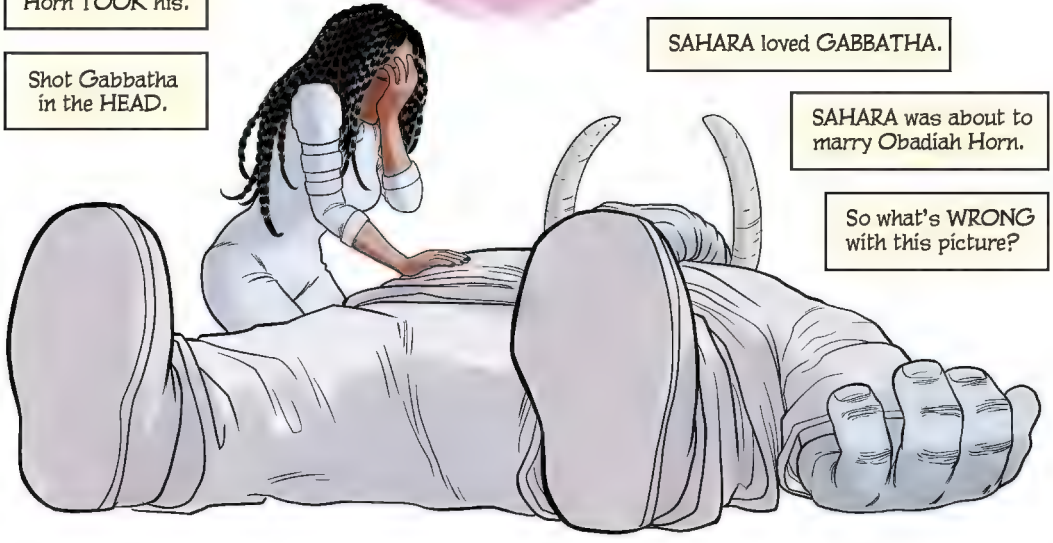
Horn TOOK his.

Shot Gabbatha in the HEAD.

SAHARA loved GABBATHA.

SAHARA was about to marry Obadiah Horn.

So what's WRONG with this picture?



As if I needed ANOTHER excuse to PUNCH Horn's lights out.

So yeah, I guess this room is kinda FULL of History.

CUTE. YOU TWO *MUNTS* ARE ON A *FIRST-NAME* BASIS.

NOW, DO ME A FAVOR AND GET THIS HIGH-CLASS *HOOKER* TO DROP HER GUN AND I'LL BE ON MY WAY.

AND THE ELEPHANT GOES *WITH* ME. I DON'T CARE WHO IT *USED* TO BELONG TO, THE PACKAGE WAS ADDRESSED TO *ME*.

ASSHOLE! YOU *KNOW* WHO I AM! SAY MY NAME *BEFORE* I KILL YOU AND *MAYBE* I'LL MAKE IT *QUICK!*

NO ONE IS LEAVING THIS ROOM UNTIL THAT WHICH IS MINE IS *RETURNED* TO ME.

FIRST MY *CHILD* WAS TAKEN FROM ME.

THEN MY *FREEDOM*.

CROSS ME AND SOON YOUR *LIFE* WILL BE *FORFEIT*.

SOON, OR *LATER*.

She said this guy was THE RIVER KILLER -- one of the Agency's UNSOLVED MYSTERIES. Could it be? Could this be the perp who regularly zipped up Elephantmen into BODY BAGS and dumped them in the L.A River?

Come to think of it, there was a WOMAN's body found in the river too. DNA came up with no matches. Somehow, she wasn't in the system. Maybe she was related to our LADY IN RED here. It kinda makes sense.

YES. *YES*, SURE, I REMEMBER YOU.

MELODY.

I WORKED FOR YOUR *BROTHER* IN NEW YORK.

AND, WHEN HE FOLLOWED ME OUT HERE... I *KILLED* HIM.

So, where has he been hiding all this time? What kind of circumstances have brought him just a heartbeat away from having his NECK BROKEN by Obadiah Horn?

OF COURSE YOU DID. YOU KILLED THEM *ALL*.

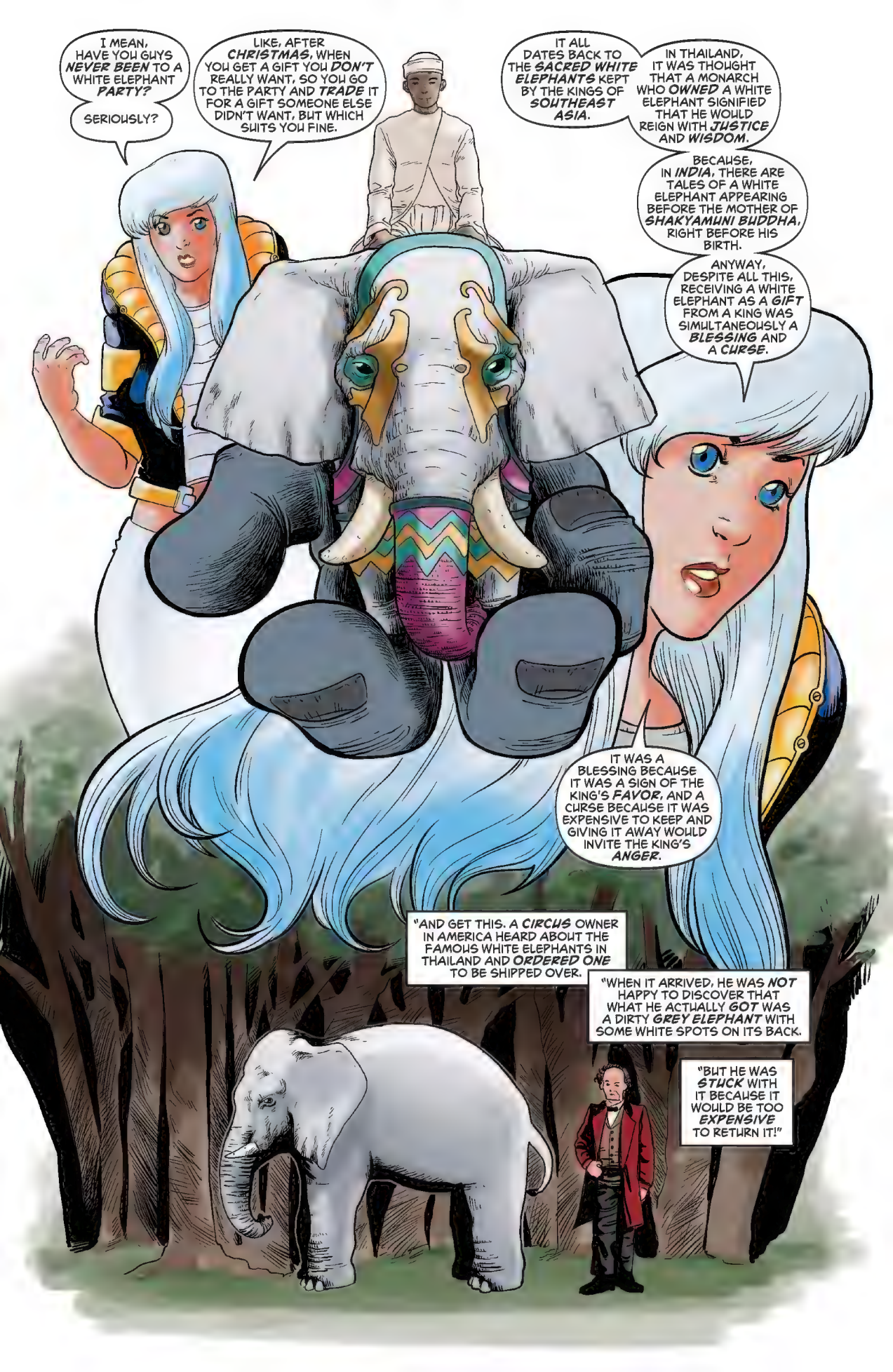
NOT JUST MY BROTHER, BUT HIS WIFE, *RHAPSODY*.

HIS DAUGHTERS, *DESTINY* AND *HARMONY*.

YOU DID IT... YOU *SILENCED* THEM ALL.

HEY, BIG GUY... I SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
I SIMPLY DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS NONSENSE.
MAKE TIME.
THE WHITE ELEPHANT WAS A GIFT TO MY WIFE, SAHARA.
IT DISAPPEARED FROM IVORY TOWERS SHORTLY BEFORE OUR MARRIAGE.
THE ELEPHANTMAN WHO GAVE IT TO HER... IS NO LONGER WITH US.
AND YOU TRACKED IT HERE SO THAT YOU COULD RETURN IT TO HER... HOW ROMANTIC.

IT WASN'T DIFFICULT. IT SEEMS THAT IT WAS SHIPPED HERE FROM IVORY TOWERS...
AN INSIDE JOB!
HEY, LOOK THERE'S A NOTE.
IT'S ADDRESSED TO CARLOS VLASCO.
THAT'S ME.
HERE.
...PANYA...?
PANYA? The Dancer?
Sahara's BODY DOUBLE, Shot DEAD by Sahara's father at Horn's wedding. Why would SHE send a note to the River Killer?!
OF COURSE, THE WHITE ELEPHANT! IT'S A WHITE ELEPHANT!

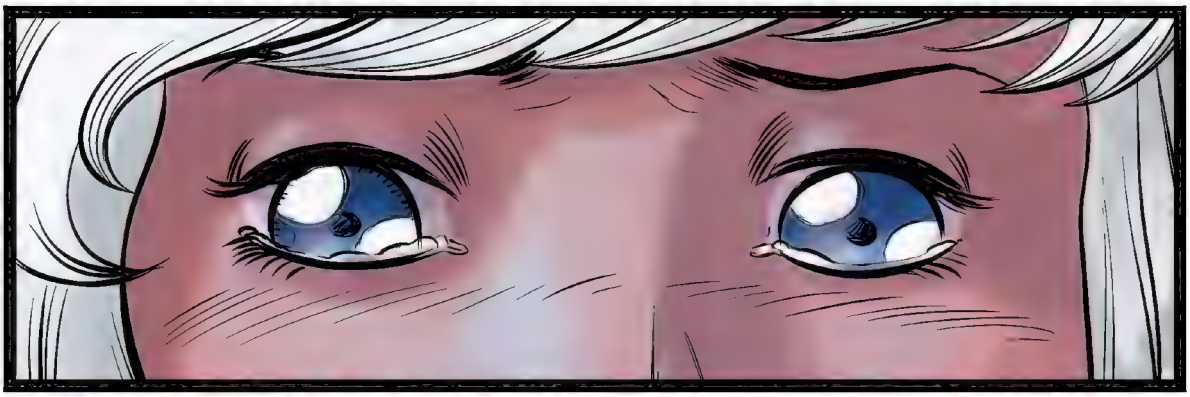

I MEAN, HAVE YOU GUYS *NEVER BEEN* TO A WHITE ELEPHANT *PARTY?*
SERIOUSLY?
LIKE, AFTER *CHRISTMAS*, WHEN YOU GET A GIFT YOU *DON'T* REALLY WANT, SO YOU GO TO THE PARTY AND *TRADE* IT FOR A GIFT SOMEONE ELSE DIDN'T WANT, BUT WHICH SUITS YOU FINE.
IT ALL DATES BACK TO THE *SACRED WHITE ELEPHANTS* KEPT BY THE KINGS OF *SOUTHEAST ASIA*.
IN THAILAND, IT WAS THOUGHT THAT A MONARCH WHO *OWNED* A WHITE ELEPHANT SIGNIFIED THAT HE WOULD REIGN WITH *JUSTICE* AND *WISDOM*.
BECAUSE, IN *INDIA*, THERE ARE TALES OF A WHITE ELEPHANT APPEARING BEFORE THE MOTHER OF *SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA*, RIGHT BEFORE HIS BIRTH.
ANYWAY, DESPITE ALL THIS, RECEIVING A WHITE ELEPHANT AS A *GIFT* FROM A KING WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY A *BLESSING* AND A *CURSE*.
IT WAS A BLESSING BECAUSE IT WAS A SIGN OF THE KING'S *FAVOR*, AND A CURSE BECAUSE IT WAS EXPENSIVE TO KEEP AND GIVING IT AWAY WOULD INVITE THE KING'S *ANGER*.
"AND GET THIS. A *CIRCUS* OWNER IN AMERICA HEARD ABOUT THE FAMOUS WHITE ELEPHANTS IN THAILAND AND *ORDERED ONE* TO BE SHIPPED OVER.
"WHEN IT ARRIVED, HE WAS *NOT* HAPPY TO DISCOVER THAT WHAT HE ACTUALLY *GOT* WAS A DIRTY *GREY ELEPHANT* WITH SOME WHITE SPOTS ON ITS BACK.
"BUT HE WAS *STUCK* WITH IT BECAUSE IT WOULD BE TOO *EXPENSIVE* TO RETURN IT!"

HOW IN THE NAME OF THE GOOD MUD DO YOU KNOW ALL THIS STUFF?
DUDE, I GREW UP SURROUNDED BY ELEPHANTMEN, I DID A REPORT ON THIS STUFF AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL!
SURE, IT'S A CUTE STORY, THERE'S ONLY ONE PROBLEM WITH IT. THIS WHITE ELEPHANT ISN'T AN UNWANTED GIFT.
MAYBE NOT, BUT I GOT THE IMPRESSION YOU DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS A LUMP OF GOLD IN THAT PACKAGE WHEN I OPENED IT.
AND I'M NOT SURE YOUR FRIEND WITH THE BLASTER THERE WAS EXPECTING IT EITHER, JUDGING FROM HIS REACTION TO THE LETTER...
WHAT'S YOUR POINT?
YES, I'D LIKE TO KNOW THAT TOO. I'VE WASTED ENOUGH TIME HERE ALREADY.

WELL, IT KINDA LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE OURSELVES A WHITE ELEPHANT PARTY... AND I DON'T THINK ANYONE IS LEAVING WITH WHAT THEY BROUGHT...
SO WHY DON'T WE ALL CALM DOWN AND SORT THIS OUT, ALL CIVILIZED LIKE?
HOW ABOUT THE ELEPHANT, THE GUNS AND ANYTHING IN OUR POCKETS GO ON THE TABLE?
AND LISTEN, PAL, YOUR FANCY SUIT AND YOUR GUN MIGHT HAVE GOT YOU IN HERE...
BUT WITH MY FRIEND HORN STANDING IN THE DOORWAY, AND ME IN FRONT OF THE WINDOW... HOW DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GONNA GET OUT?
I'M NOT LEAVING HERE WITHOUT THE WHITE GOLD ELEPHANT.
001
THEN YOU'RE NOT LEAVING HERE AT ALL.

OKAY, SURE, I'LL *PLAY ALONG* WITH YOUR CUTE LITTLE GAME...
BUT *SHE* HAS TO PUT HER GUN DOWN *FIRST*.
LIKE *THAT* IS GOING TO HAPPEN.
ON THE COUNT OF *THREE* THEN... ONE, TWO...
THREE.
ALL I GOT IS... A BAG OF *GUMMIS*...
SO SOMEONE'S GOING HOME *LUCKY* TONIGHT!

WHAT ABOUT THE LETTER?
IT'S PERSONAL.
LIKE DEATH IN THE FAMILY?
VANITY, WHY DON'T YOU READ IT?
AS YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO TRADE, MAYBE YOU CAN OFFER EVERYONE A DECISON.



HIP, HE HAS TO TAKE THE IDOL.
IT-IT'S NOT FOR HIM, IT'S FOR SOMEONE *ELSE*.
SOMEONE WHO NEEDS IT MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE HERE.

I AM NOT LEAVING WITHOUT MY PROPERTY.
I NEED THAT IDOL.
SAHARA NEEDS THAT IDOL.

OBADIAH. SHE DOESN'T NEED IT. SHE NEEDS *YOU*. YOU *ARE* HER IDOL.
IT'S NOT ABOUT A PIECE OF *PROPERTY*. IT'S ABOUT YOU TAKING *OWNERSHIP* OF WHAT YOU DID.
UNTIL THEN *YOU* ARE THE UNWANTED WHITE ELEPHANT HERE.

IF YOU'RE WHO MELODY SAYS YOU ARE, WE'LL MEET AGAIN SOME DAY SOON, OR SOME *DARK NIGHT*.
TAKE THE ELEPHANT -- BUT MAKE SURE IT GETS TO WHERE IT'S SUPPOSED TO GO.

MELODY, YOU CAME FOR *REVENGE*, I GUESS. CAN'T YOU JUST LEAVE WITH YOUR *LIFE*?
SEEMS LIKE THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY LOST THEIRS, MUST YOU BE SO COMMITTED TO SHARING THEIR FATE?

THIS IS YOUR PARTY PIECE, FLASK?
YOU THINK I'M GOING TO *ACCEPT* YOUR COMPANIONS' SOFT-HEARTED *WHIM* ON WHO THE IDOL SHOULD BE *AWARDED* TO?
TOO LATE.

IT'S GONE.
I GUESS THAT'S THAT THEN.
Y'KNOW, THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THAT GUY... KINDA FAMILIAR.
MY GOD, YOU FOOLS!
HE'S THE ONE THAT CAN TURN INVISIBLE, BUT HE SAW RIGHT THROUGH YOU!
SO WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU THINK YOU ACHIEVED HERE, FLASK?
NO SHOTS FIRED. NO ONE HURT OR KILLED.
GIVEN OUR RECENT HISTORY, I'D SAY THAT'S A WIN-WIN FOR US.
AND THE PILE OF BODIES I HAD TO STEP OVER ON THE SIDEWALK?
MELODY'S GOON SQUAD. WHY DON'T YOU HAVE YOUR GOONS CLEAN THAT UP, HUH?
GO HOME TO SAHARA WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE. Y'KNOW, THE WAY SHE LIKES YOU.

It's never a Good Day when you let a killer walk away with stolen goods. I guess if The River Killer kills another Elephantman, that blood is gonna be on MY hands.
And no amount of L.A rain is gonna be able to wash it off.
Like I always say, would a LITTLE Ray of Sunshine be too much to ask for?
Well, VANITY got to walk away today and in my book, that's a victory. Still a kid and she's seen too much death already.
Too much death for a HUMAN.
She was cagey about how come she was waiting over there at Farrell's offices. I'll have to have a word with Jack in the morning.
You know it's a long day when you're looking forward to seeing your iFrog when you get home.
WAGNER?
WAGNER? DID YOU POWER DOWN?
I TURNED HIM OFF, BIG GUY...

NOW COME HERE AND LET ME SEE IF I CAN FIND *YOUR* SWITCHES...
Ah, MIKI. Ten Years of rain in Los Angeles but sometimes there IS a Ray of Sunshine.
"Welcome to Sunny California!"

VANITY? YOU UP THERE?
SORRY I'M LATE... I, ER... I...
VANITY?
DAMN. I TOLD HER I'D LEAVE THE PLACE UNLOCKED.
HUNH.
JACK!
SORRY, WE KIND OF HAD A LITTLE PARTY
CORE THEN HAD TO
EAVE. HIP LEFT
YOU SOME
CANDY!
JANITY!
GUMMI BEARS! MUST HAVE BEEN SOME PARTY.

Carlos, or whatever you are calling yourself now,

I always promised myself I would remember who I was, where I came from. I promised myself I would never forget my mam, my sister.

But I wanted so much to be Sahara. I wanted so much to be loved like her, I wanted to dress like her, think like her. I wanted to lose myself in her and become Obadiah Horn's Beloved Wife.

So I started to forget that I am Panya, not Sahara. Her life is not my life, her thoughts are not my thoughts. Horn has perhaps mistaken me for the Woman he Loves, but for how much longer now? Before the Wedding? After the Wedding? I have seen how he looks at me with questioning eyes, he senses that there is something different about Sahara. I am not the woman he wanted. How long now before he discards me as he discards the others that displease him?

I have no way of communicating with my family, and I have no way of sending money to my mam, but I think this Elephant is made of some kind of gold and must be worth something. One of the cooks in the kitchen is perhaps more in love with Sahara than Obadiah himself and has agreed to ship this package to you on my – her – behalf.

Perhaps I mean nothing to you, but I know how much you hate Elephantmen, so help me if only to hurt them. I can't risk sending this to you care of Casbah Joe so I am sending it to your last known address in town. When it finds its way into your hands, please sell it and make sure my mam is provided for.

Tell her to leave whatever accommodations the people here found for her. Tell her to get out of California and never come back. If you have any kind of heart, please don't let her share my fate.

Tell her Panya never forgot her, even if she forgot herself.

3

ELEPHANTMEN

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL 1:

El·e·phant·men [el-*uh*-*fuh*nt-men] noun:
1. Transgenics; human/animal hybrids, genetically engineered by the **MAPPO Corporation** for military deployment in the **Afro-Sino War** (2239-2243). Rehabilitated by the **United Nations**, these creatures were gradually inculcated into human society.
2. Derogatory term for such.

SEMPITERNITY

Richard Starkings Words • Axel Medellin Art

With Apologies to John Byrne

IF THERE IS THE STRANGE YET REASSURING SOUND OF A **GENTLE WHISPERING VOICE** OVER THE ROOF OF **THE BAVERSTOCK PROJECT** THIS EVENING, THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS THAT HEAR IT PUT IT DOWN TO THE HEAVY RAINFALL **TYPICAL** AT THIS TIME OF YEAR IN LOS ANGELES.

IT'S 5.45PM. AND IT HAS BEEN 5.45PM FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR.

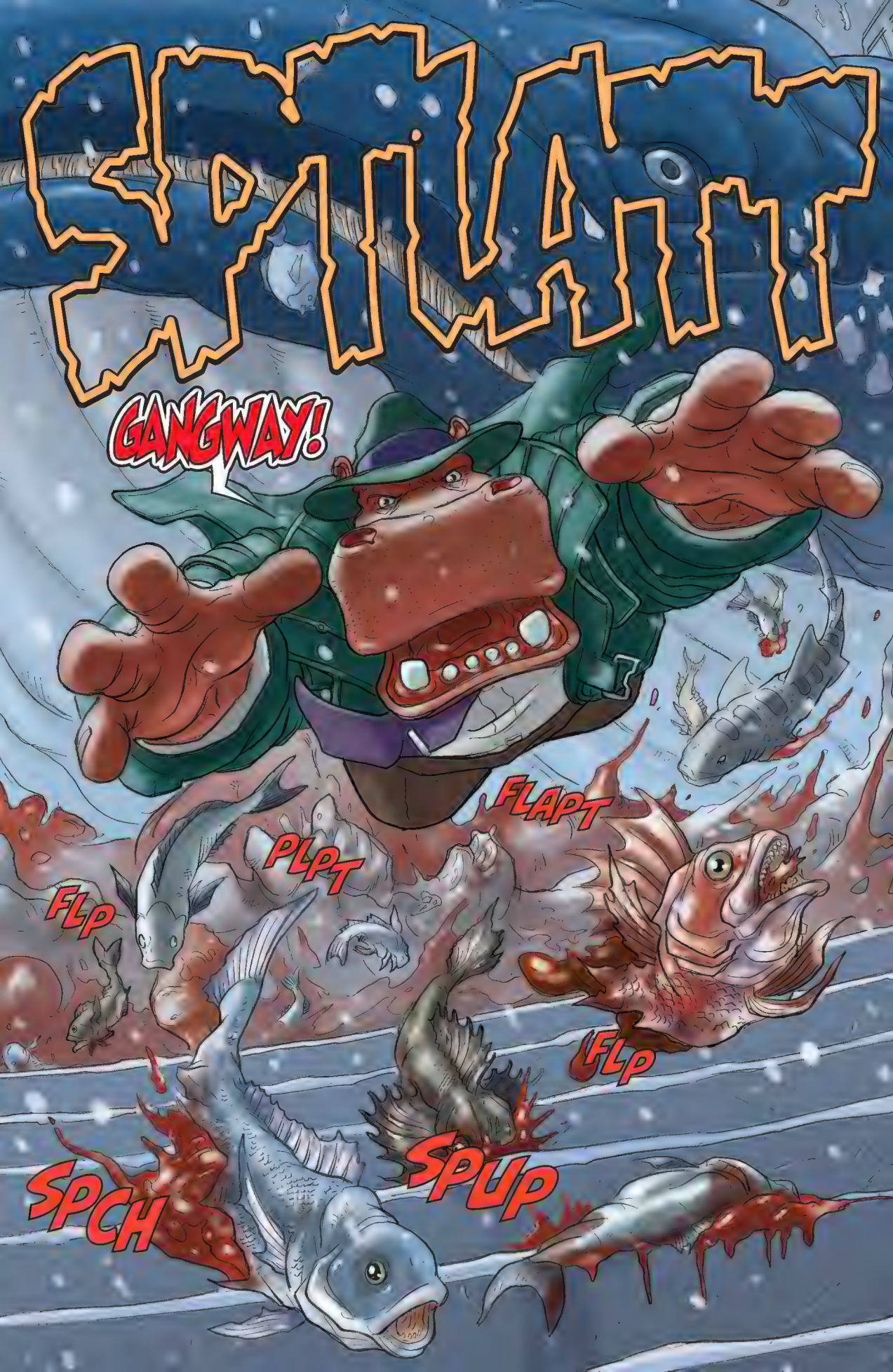
DESPITE BEING PROGRAMMED WITH SIMPLE **CONSCIOUSNESS** AND **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**, THE DRONES CARRYING ESSENTIAL CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS TO THE TOP OF THE PROJECT ARE **COMPLETELY UNAWARE** OF THE FACT THAT THREE OF THEM WERE LYING BROKEN IN THE STREETS JUST FIFTY-SIX MINUTES AGO.

MOST OF THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS THEMSELVES WERE KILLED IN THE SAME MOMENT, FALLING TWO HUNDRED FLOORS TO THE STREET BELOW...
THEY HAVE NO RECOLLECTION OF THIS EITHER.
HIERONYMOUS "HIP" FLASK HAS NO RECOLLECTION OF ANYTHING UNTOWARD THAT HAPPENED TO HIM IN THE LAST SIXTY MINUTES OR SO.
HE WAS DOWNTOWN ON INFORMATION AGENCY BUSINESS. HE REMEMBERS THAT...
HE REMEMBERS THAT THE RAIN WAS GETTING COLDER...
HE REMEMBERS LOOKING UP...

THE WIND PICKED UP...
WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE GOOD MUD...?
THE RAIN TURNED SUDDENLY TO HAIL...
SHEESH!
THEN THE HAIL TURNED INTO--
SNOW?!

BLAP
HWNH?
AND, SERIOUSLY...
FISH FALLING FROM THE SKY IS NOT THE KIND OF THING YOU'RE GOING TO FORGET...
FLUPT
WHAT TH--?!
SPUP
BLAT
PLPT
SPCH
SPUP
FLAPT
MAN, LIFE IS JUST FULL O'REVOLTIN' DEVELOPMENTS!

INTERMITTENT SEAFOOD WITH A CHANCE OF BLUE WHALES LATER...
THIS WAS DEFINITELY NOT IN THE WEATHER FORECAST!
SPUP
SPCH
FLP
BLP
SPCH
BLAT


SPLASH
GANGWAY!
FLAPT
PLPT
FLP
FLP
SPUP
SPCH

BDUMP
BDUMP
BDUMP
BDUMP
OOF
OW
OUCH!
OWW
UNHH...
I PROMISE... I'LL NEVER EAT SUSHI AGAIN...
OOF
MUDDAMNIT!
I PROMISE... I'LL NEVER EAT SUSHI AGAIN...
WHAT IN MAPPO'S SEVEN CIRCLES OF HELL...?

OH
SH!T
YEAH
YOU.

LOOKLOOK LOOK, I KNOW THIS IS A SHOCK... SEEING ME HERE--
I KNOW YOU MUST HAVE JUST A TON OF QUESTIONS... HOW? WHY? WHAT--
NAH, I'VE GOT JUST ONE QUESTION FOR YA, HOMIE...
ISN'T THAT MY NEW JACKET?
HUH? WELL -- DUH -- YEAH!
OF COURSE IT IS!

OH, WAIT. I GET IT... YOU DON'T GET IT. DANG, NEVER HAD TO EXPLAIN THIS TO MYSELF BEFORE..
SEE, HERE'S THE THING. I'M YOU, FLASK... AND YOU'RE ME. ONLY YOU'RE A COUPLA YEARS YOUNGER...
AND I'M -- WELL, I'M A COUPLA YEARS OLDER... UH, OBVIOUSLY.
Y'KNOW, NOW THAT I'M HEARING MYSELF SAY THAT STUFF OUT LOUD I DO REALIZE HOW, UH...
RIDICULOUS ALL THAT SOUNDS, RIGHT...?
BUT, YOU KNOW, NO POINT BEATING MYSELF UP ABOUT IT...
THEN AGAIN--
STUPID CONVERSATION ANYWAY..
POW

SHWFFT
UHH... FIGURES.
GUESS I'M JUST GONNA HAVETA TAKE YOUR PUNKASS DOWN.
AND IF THAT JACKET GETS SCUFFED WHEN I DO SO...
...I'M SENDING YOU THE BILL FER FIXIN' IT!
DAGNABIT, HIP, YA JUST HAD TO PROVOKE HIM, DINTCHA?
ALL RIGHT THEN, BRING IT!

WILD

SHWIFT
DAMN!
YOU'D THINK, AFTER THROWING THAT PUNCH LAST TIME, I'D HAVE SEEN IT COMING.
AN' COME TO THINK OF IT, WHAT BROUGHT US HERE, ANYWAY?
I DON'T NEED A STREET FULL OF SEAFOOD TO KNOW SOMETHING FISHY IS GOING ON AROUND HERE...
AH. THERE YOU GO...
THE BAVERSTOCK FOUNDATION.
ALMOST FINISHED.
BEFORE ALL THE NONSENSE THAT GOT ME CAUGHT UP WITH THE TRUST IN THE FIRST PLACE.
MUST HAVE DRAGGED US HERE LIKE IRON FILINGS TO A MAGNET...
HAPPIER TIMES...
GOTTA PUT AN END TO THIS, QUICK...

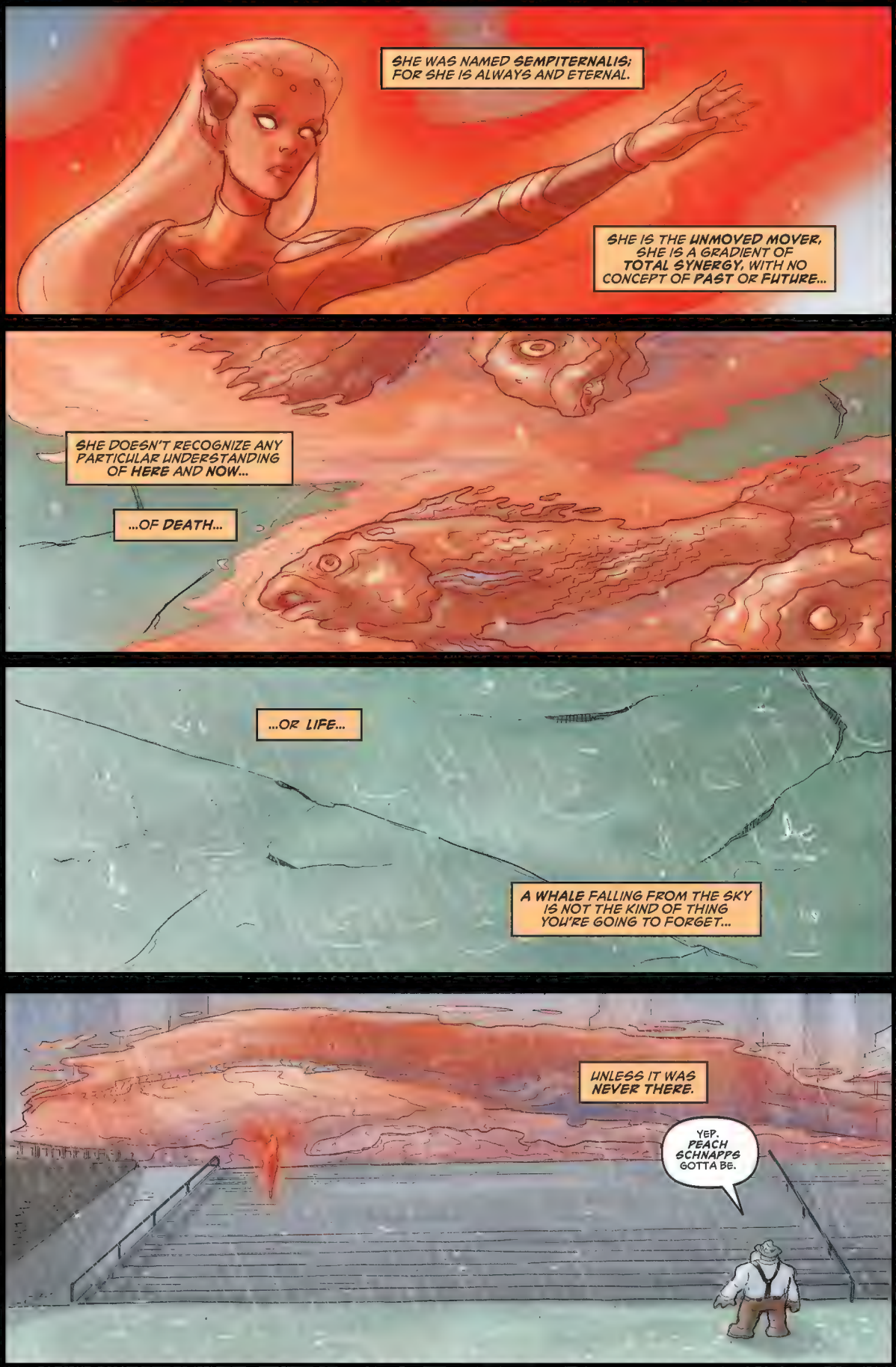
FLAPH
OOF!
SPLOOCH
OKAY, MAYBE NOT MY MOST DIGNIFIED MOVE.
LISTEN, I DON'T HAVE TIME TO EXPLAIN, WE JUST HAVE TO STOP THIS NOW.
LOOK AT ME. I'M YOU... YOU'RE ME... WE KEEP THIS UP, WE BOTH GET HURT.
IS THAT SO?

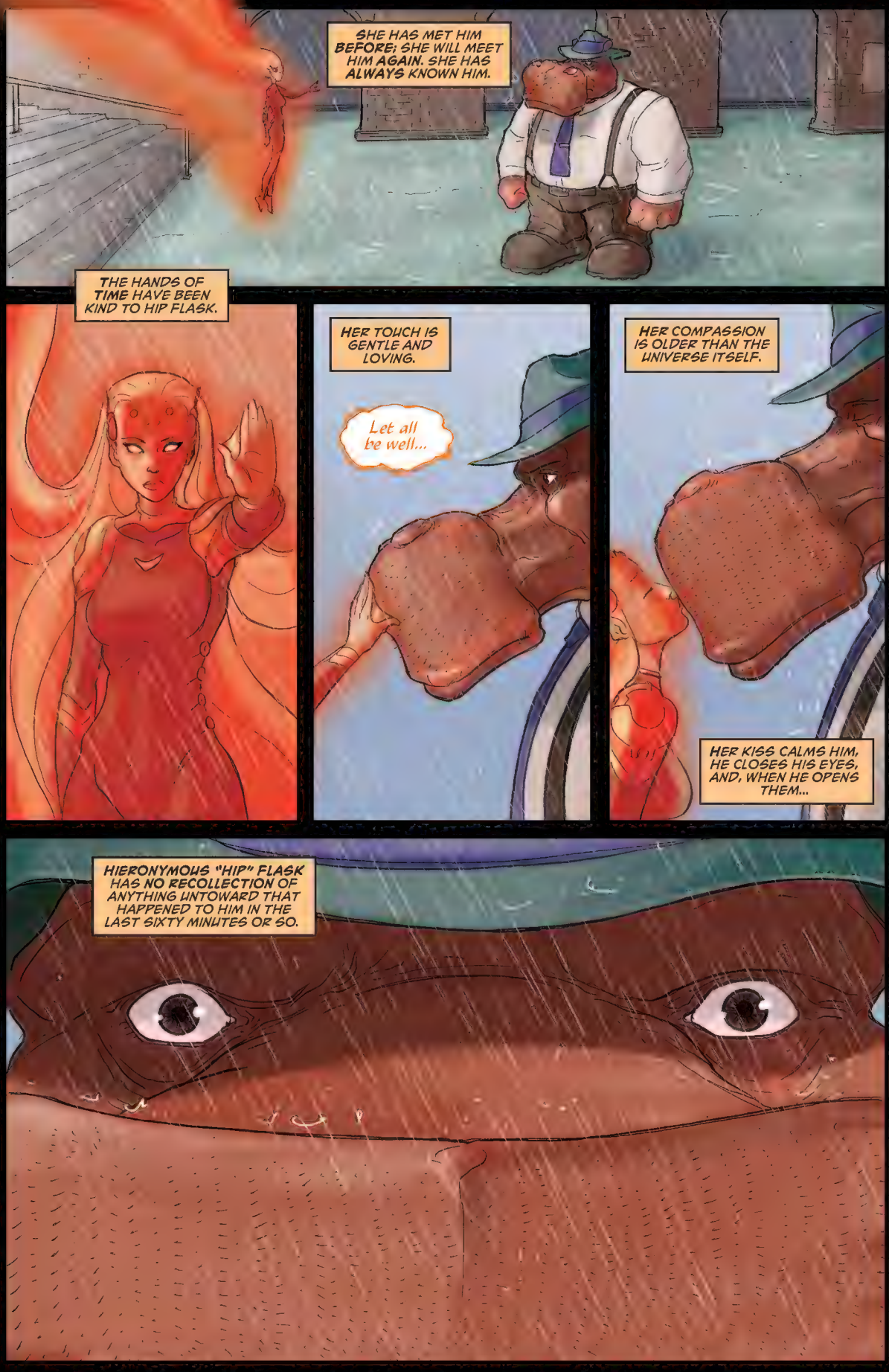
D'YA THINK I CAN'T HOLD MY OWN WITH A FISH? WELL, STEP A LITTLE CLOSER, BUB.
OH YEAH, THIS IS PRODUCTIVE.
FLASK? ARE YOU KIDDING ME?
THEY'RE GOING TO THROW THE RULEBOOK AT YOU!
FARRELL, LISTEN, I WAS JUST TRYIN' TO GET OUT OF HERE... HE STARTED IT!

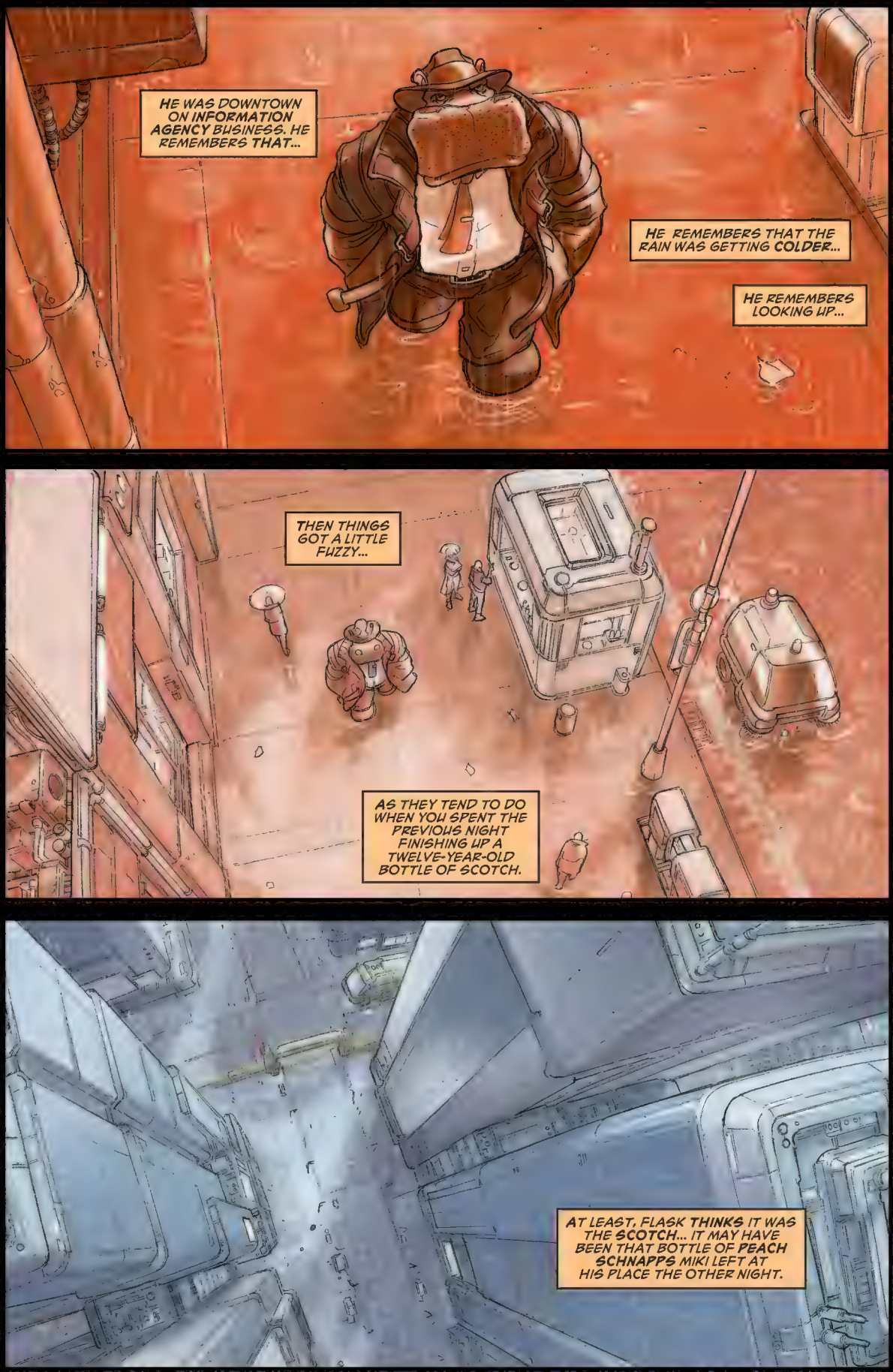
THAT'S CUTE, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
BUT -- NOTWITHSTANDING THE FACT THAT OUR PRESENCE HERE *PUNCHED A HOLE IN REALITY* THAT DROPPED THE LOCAL TEMPERATURE ABOUT *FORTY DEGREES* AND SUCKED SEVERAL THOUSAND GALLONS OF *SEAWATER* OUT OF THE PACIFIC AND DUMPED IT ON DOWNTOWN L.A --
I'M ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BUILDING HERE IN A PITCH *LIFE-OR-DEATH* BATTLE WITH A ROBOT TO *SAVE THE FUTURE*, AND YOU...
...*YOU* ARE OUT OF HARM'S WAY *PLAYING WITH YOURSELF!*
I WAS ALMOST *CRUSHED* BY A *BLUE WHALE*, I'D HARDLY
NOT LISTENING!
FARRELL?
FARRELL? WHAT THE *HELL* ARE YA TALKING ABOUT. *WHO* IS THIS GUY?
WHEN DID YOU HAVE THE TIME TO GROW A *BEARD?*
DON'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT ALL THIS, HIP.
IT'LL ALL MAKE SENSE IN ABOUT THREE YEARS... INASMUCH AS THIS MAKES ANY SENSE TO *ME*, ANYWAY.
BUT, HEY, NICE TO SEE YOU ROCKIN' THAT CLICHÉ *FEDORA* LOOK!
TAKES ME BACK.

ALL RIGHT, BIG GUY, LOOKS LIKE WE'RE INSIDE THE SIXTY-MINUTE WINDOW. SHOULDN'T BE TOO MUCH WORK FOR SEMPER TO CLEAN UP ALL THE MESS...
SEEYA LATER, HIP...
SAY HI TO *MIKI* FOR ME.
SORRY ABOUT THE FISH-SLAP.
NOT THAT YOU'RE GONNA REMEMBER ANY OF THIS...
HEY, WAIT...
WAIT!
WHAT ABOUT ALL THAT *HOLE-IN-REALITY* CRAP?
WHAT ABOUT ALL THESE *FISH?*
WHAT ABOUT THAT FREAKING WHALE?!

AND WHAT... WHAT IS UP WITH THAT ORANGE STAR IN THE SKY...?
OKAY, THAT -- THAT IS NOT A STAR...
THAT IS A WOMAN...
YEP. THAT'S AN ORANGE WOMAN FLYING OVER A DEAD BLUE WHALE LYING IN SIX FEET OF SNOW IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES...
AND I AM GONNA WAKE UP ANY MOMENT NOW...
SHE IS NOT A DREAM.
SHE EXISTS OUTSIDE OF TIME. SHE IS SIMULTANEOUSLY IN FULL AND PERFECT POSSESSION OF INTERMINABLE LIFE.
I BET I POLISHED OFF THAT BOTTLE OF PEACH SCHNAPPS MIKI BROUGHT OVER THE OTHER NIGHT...
SHE IS THE ENGINE OF OUROBOROUS.


SHE WAS NAMED SEMPITERNALIS; FOR SHE IS ALWAYS AND ETERNAL.
SHE IS THE UNMOVED MOVER, SHE IS A GRADIENT OF TOTAL SYNERGY, WITH NO CONCEPT OF PAST OR FUTURE...
SHE DOESN'T RECOGNIZE ANY PARTICULAR UNDERSTANDING OF HERE AND NOW...
...OF DEATH...
...OR LIFE...
A WHALE FALLING FROM THE SKY IS NOT THE KIND OF THING YOU'RE GOING TO FORGET...
UNLESS IT WAS NEVER THERE.
YEP. PEACH SCHNAPPS GOTTA BE.


SHE HAS MET HIM BEFORE; SHE WILL MEET HIM AGAIN. SHE HAS ALWAYS KNOWN HIM.
THE HANDS OF TIME HAVE BEEN KIND TO HIP FLASK.
HER TOUCH IS GENTLE AND LOVING.
Let all be well...
HER COMPASSION IS OLDER THAN THE UNIVERSE ITSELF.
HER KISS CALMS HIM, HE CLOSES HIS EYES, AND, WHEN HE OPENS THEM...
HIERONYMOUS "HIP" FLASK HAS NO RECOLLECTION OF ANYTHING UNTOWARD THAT HAPPENED TO HIM IN THE LAST SIXTY MINUTES OR SO.


HE WAS DOWNTOWN ON INFORMATION AGENCY BUSINESS. HE REMEMBERS THAT...
HE REMEMBERS THAT THE RAIN WAS GETTING COLDER...
HE REMEMBERS LOOKING UP...
THEN THINGS GOT A LITTLE FUZZY...
AS THEY TEND TO DO WHEN YOU SPENT THE PREVIOUS NIGHT FINISHING UP A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOTTLE OF SCOTCH.
AT LEAST, FLASK THINKS IT WAS THE SCOTCH... IT MAY HAVE BEEN THAT BOTTLE OF PEACH SCHNAPPS MIKI LEFT AT HIS PLACE THE OTHER NIGHT.

IF THERE IS THE STRANGE YET REASSURING SOUND OF A GENTLE WHISPERING VOICE OVER THE ROOF OF THE BAVERSTOCK PROJECT THIS EVENING, THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS THAT HEAR IT PUT IT DOWN TO THE HEAVY RAINFALL TYPICAL AT THIS TIME OF YEAR IN LOS ANGELES.

IT'S 5.45PM. AND IT HAS BEEN 5.45PM FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR.

4

ELEPHANTMEN

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL 2:

El·e·phant·men [el-*uh*-*fuhnt*-men] noun:
1. Transgenics; human/animal hybrids, genetically engineered by the **MAPPO Corporation** for military deployment in the **Afro-Sino War** (2239-2243). Rehabilitated by the **United Nations**, these creatures were gradually inculcated into human society.
2. Derogatory term for such.

ONE YEAR AGO

A BIRD FLEW INTO THE WINDOW AT IVORY TOWERS

ITS WING BROKEN.

OBADIAH HORN'S SOLUTION TO THE BIRD'S SUFFERING WAS VERY SIMPLE.

HE HAD LEARNED TO SURROUND HIMSELF WITH THE *STRONG* AND THE POWERFUL.

WEAKER CREATURES HE *DISCARDED*.

LOS ANGELES • NOW

WHAT PURPOSE COULD THEY SERVE?

SAHARA.

"MY LOVE, IS THAT *BLOOD* ON THE HAND TOWEL?"

WEAPONIZED

Richard Starkings Words • Axel Medellin Art

OBADIAH--?

MY LOVE, IS THAT *BLOOD* ON THE HAND TOWEL?

IT'S REALLY NOTHING, MY DEAR.

YOU SEE? A BIRD PECKED ME AS I STOOD OUT ON THE BALCONY. IT'S NOT EVEN A SCRATCH.

YOU SHOULDN'T BE AFRAID OF A LITTLE BLOOD ON MY HANDS.

"IT'S REALLY NOTHING, MY DEAR."

"YOU SHOULDN'T BE AFRAID OF A LITTLE *BLOOD* ON MY HANDS."

OBADIAH...

"...TELL ME THE *TRUTH*."

ROAR

UH-WH-- *MAMA!*

SAHARA, MY LOVE... WHAT IS IT?

MAMA! TH-THE LION... IT'S COMING TO EAT ME!

NORTH AFRICA • 2223

DON'T BE SILLY, LITTLE ONE, IT'S JUST A *NIGHTMARE*... YOU'RE *SAFE*, AT HOME...

BUT, MAMA, I-I *SAW* IT...

TODAY, OUT IN THE DESERT JUST BY OUR VILLAGE...
HE WAS STARING AT ME...
"...TWO CUBS WERE PLAYING IN THE LONG GRASS...
"THE-THE LION JUST WALKED RIGHT UP TO THEM...
"AND-AND HE JUST -- HE JUST BIT THE FIRST CUB WITH HIS TEETH!
"THE SECOND CUB MUST NOT HAVE SEEN WHAT HAPPENED...
"HE ROLLED ON HIS BACK IN THE GRASS...
"AND THE LION -- HE BIT THE OTHER CUB INTO PIECES TOO!

"THEN HE-HE SAW ME,
"AND HE BROUGHT ONE OF THE CUBS TO THE VERY EDGE OF THE LONG GRASS.
"AND HE ATE IT!
"MAMA, HE ATE THAT POOR LITTLE CUB RIGHT-RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME...
"AND HE STARED AT ME AND THEN I HEARD HIM GROWL IN MY HEAD...
"I'MA GONNA EAT YOU NEXT!"
OH SAHARA, MY DARLING LITTLE GIRL....
LISTEN...
I WANT YOU TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME.
I WANT YOU PRETEND...

"SAHARA, PRETEND THAT YOU ARE IN *A CAGE* WITH *TWO* LIONS..."

WHAT IN SEVEN SHADES OF MAPPO IS *THAT?*
NORTH AFRICA • 2238

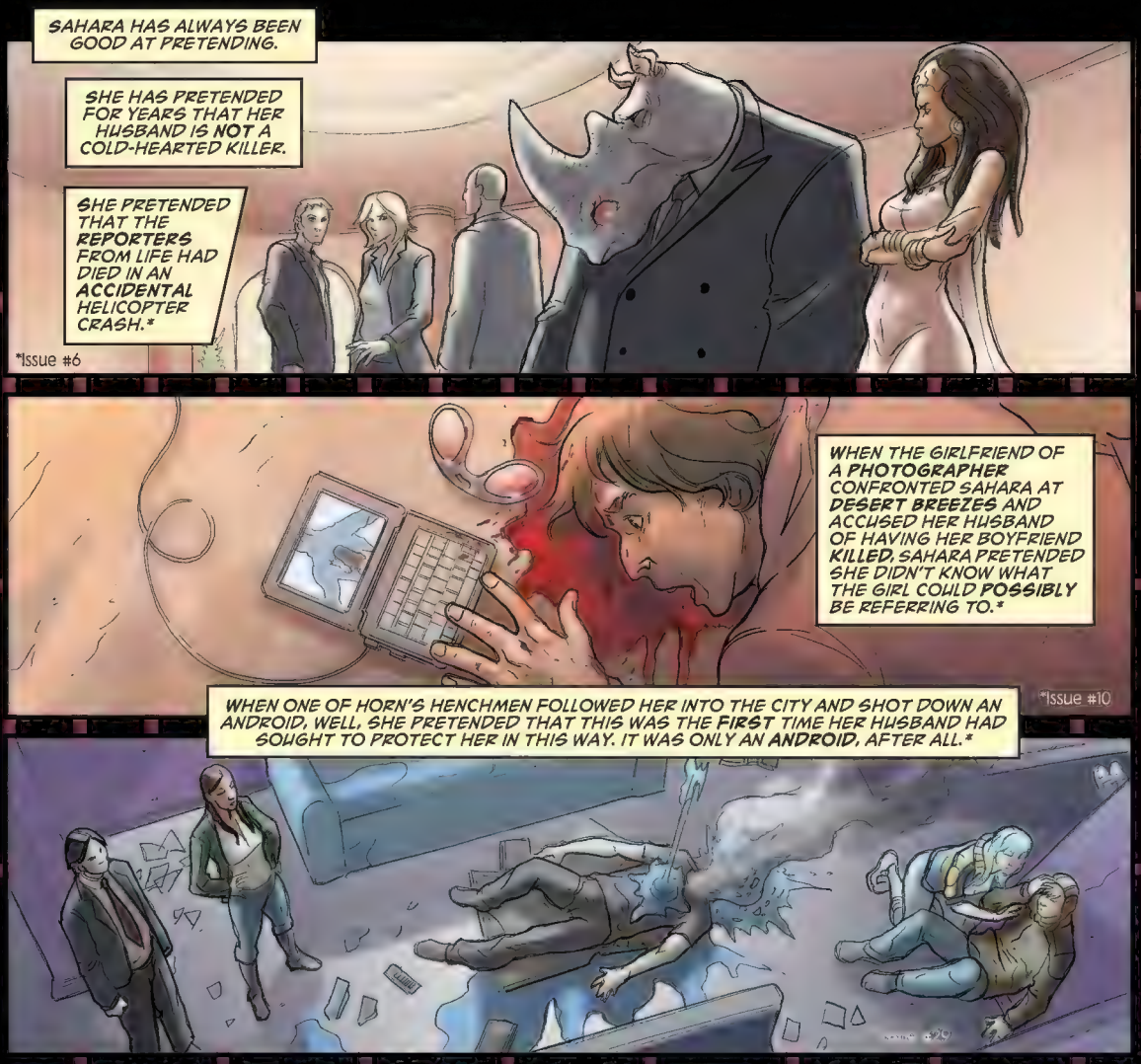
THIS IS *THE EQUALIZER*. HE IS AS STRONG AS ANY OF YOU.
HE IS HERE TO TEST YOU IN *ONE-TO-ONE COMBAT*.
ONCE ACTIVATED, THE EQUALIZER WILL NOT REST UNTIL IT HAS *KILLED* EVERY ONE OF YOU.
UNLESS YOU *DESTROY* THE EQUALIZER FIRST.
YOU ARE OF NO USE TO MAPPO IF YOU CANNOT DEFEAT A *MACHINE*.
FIGHT NOW. FOR YOUR *LIVES*.

ZZZmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
EQUALIZER *ACTIVATED*... EVALUATION BEGINS.

THIS WON'T TAKE LONG.
AGREED.
THOOM!

EVALUATION: HUMAN/ CROCODILE HYBRID.
SAVAGE. COLD-BLOODED. THIS SUBJECT: IMPETUOUS.
NEUTRALIZED.
KILL OR BE KILLED, WHICH IS IT TO BE?
PERHAPS WE SHOULD SEND AUTOMATONS INTO BATTLE IN YOUR PLACE.
GET UP, WEAKLING. FIGHT.

"TWO HUNGRY LIONS...
"THERE APPEARS TO BE NO POSSIBILITY OF ESCAPE...
"WHAT DO YOU DO?"
SAHARA. YOU ARE THE LOVE OF MY LIFE.
I AM HERE WITH EMPTY HANDS TO ASK YOU ONE THING...
I KILLED GABBATHA. PLEASE, FORGIVE ME.
"IT'S REALLY NOTHING, MY DEAR."
"YOU SHOULDN'T BE AFRAID OF A LITTLE BLOOD ON MY HANDS."
"SAHARA... WHAT DO YOU DO?"


SAHARA HAS ALWAYS BEEN GOOD AT PRETENDING.
SHE HAS PRETENDED FOR YEARS THAT HER HUSBAND IS **NOT** A COLD-HEARTED KILLER.
SHE PRETENDED THAT THE **REPORTERS** FROM LIFE HAD DIED IN AN **ACCIDENTAL** HELICOPTER CRASH.*
*Issue #6
WHEN THE GIRLFRIEND OF A **PHOTOGRAPHER** CONFRONTED SAHARA AT **DESERT BREEZES** AND ACCUSED HER HUSBAND OF HAVING HER BOYFRIEND **KILLED**, SAHARA PRETENDED SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE GIRL COULD **POSSIBLY** BE REFERRING TO.*
*Issue #10
WHEN ONE OF HORN'S HENCHMEN FOLLOWED HER INTO THE CITY AND SHOT DOWN AN ANDROID, WELL, SHE PRETENDED THAT THIS WAS THE **FIRST** TIME HER HUSBAND HAD SOUGHT TO PROTECT HER IN THIS WAY. IT WAS ONLY AN **ANDROID**, AFTER ALL.*
ARE YOU GOING TO KILL **AGAIN**, OBADIAH?

"THE LIONS ARE SO HUNGRY, THEY ARE SURE TO ATTACK YOU SOON, SAHARA, AGAIN..."
...THEY WILL EAT YOU IF YOU DON'T DO SOMETHING!
THINK! HOW DO YOU GET OUT OF THIS?
Uhh...
"I'LL FEED THEM A PIECE OF MEAT! THEN THEY WON'T BE HUNGRY ANY MORE!"
"YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MEAT TO GIVE THEM!"
"THEN I'LL JUMP UP TO THE TOP OF THE CAGE AND CLIMB OUT THROUGH THE BARS!"
"THERE ARE NO BARS ON THE TOP OF THE CAGE!"
"I'LL SCREAM SO LOUD SOMEONE WILL HEAR AND COME SHOOT THEM!"
"BUT THERE'S NO ONE NEAR TO HEAR YOU!"
THEN THEY'RE GOING TO EAT ME AND I'M GOING TO DIE!

THAK
EVALUATION: HUMAN/ WARTHOG HYBRID.
MUSCLEBOUND, HIRSUTE. THIS SUBJECT: SLOW-WITTED.
ZZNNTTTT!!
SHNTT
SLOW-WITTED?
EVALUATION: HUMAN/ RHINOCEROS HYBRID.
FAST-MOVING, POWERFUL. THIS SUBJECT: DETERMINED.
WHAK
EVALUATE THIS!

EVALUATION: STILL IN PROGRESS!
ZZmmmm
FOOM!
THIS IS YOUR TEST? THIS "EQUALIZER"? THERE IS NOTHING EQUAL HERE.
WHY DON'T YOU COME DOWN FROM YOUR HIGH HORSE AND FIGHT ME "ONE-TO-ONE"?

ONE DAY, THE MAN WHO FUSED HUMAN AND ANIMAL DNA TOGETHER WILL MEET HIS MAKER...
ONE DAY THE TRANSGENIC WHO WILL BE KNOWN AS OBADIAH HORN WILL BRING DOWN NIKKEN HIMSELF...
THIS SUBJECT: NEUTRALIZED.
IN THE MEANTIME...

IN THE MEANTIME, HE WILL TAKE DOWN EVERY CREATURE THAT STANDS IN HIS WAY...
...WHETHER THEY BE MADE OF FLESH...
...OR METAL!
EXCELLENT.
AS I THOUGHT, YOU ARE A TRUE KILLER. A LIVING WEAPON.

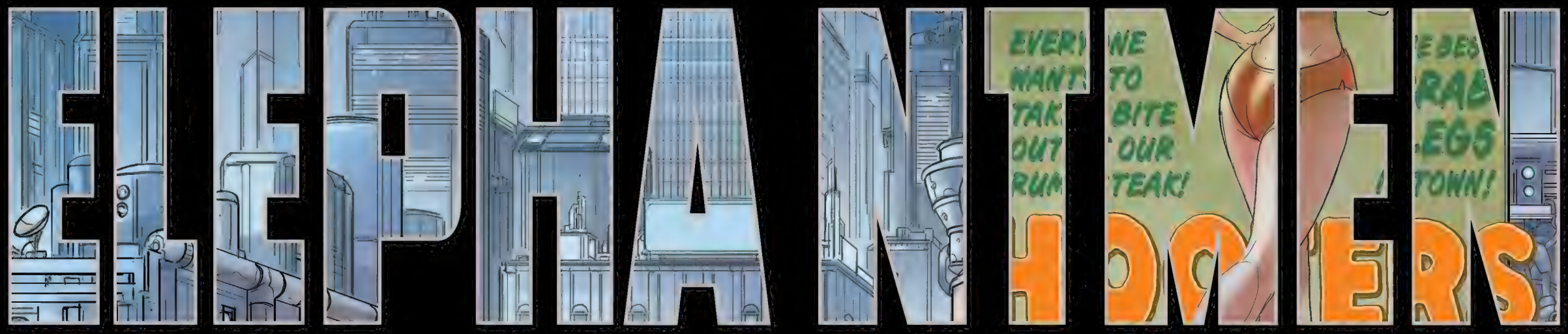
OF COURSE HER HUSBAND WILL KILL AGAIN.
ONLY A FEW SHORT MONTHS AGO, SAHARA HERSELF WOULD HAVE KILLED THE ASSASSIN, YVETTE, WHO HAD BROKEN INTO THEIR HOME.*
*Issue #39
OBADIAH HORN WAS TRAINED TO KILL. IT'S A MIRACLE THAT HE BECAME A MAN SHE COULD LOVE.*
*Issue #62
GABBATHA, SHOT DEAD BY HER HUSBAND BEFORE HER OWN EYES, CAME TO HER IN A DREAM:
"YOU HAVE TO FORGIVE YOUR HUSBAND," HE GENTLY TOLD HER.*
*Issue #70
WHO ELSE COULD POSSIBLY PROTECT HER FROM JOSHUA SERENGHETI, HER FATHER?
WHO ELSE WILL TRACK HIM DOWN AND RETRIEVE THEIR STOLEN CHILD FROM HIS GRASP?
SAHARA, AGAIN... PRETEND YOU'RE IN A CAGE WITH TWO HUNGRY LIONS...
WHAT DO YOU DO?

I DON'T KNOW, MAMA, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...
SAHARA. IT'S EASY.
JUST STOP PRETENDING.
SHE MARRIED A MONSTER. SHE KNEW THAT.
SAHARA. I WILL DO WHATEVER--
SHE KNOWS THAT.
Shhhh...

SHE BETROTHED HERSELF TO AN ELEPHANTMAN WHO WOULD KILL FOR HER. KILL FOR THEIR SON.
A SOUL THAT WILL NOT REST UNTIL HE HAS TRACKED DOWN AND KILLED HER FATHER, AND RETRIEVED THEIR CHILD.
SHE CAN STOP PRETENDING.
SAHARA.
MY LOVE...

5

ELEPHANTMEN



UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL 3:

Anthropoid [an-thruh-poid] adjective:
1. Of or belonging to the primate suborder Anthropoidea, which consists of the New World monkeys, Old World monkeys, and apes including humans.
2. Resembling a human, especially in shape or outward appearance.
3. "Like a man;" A creature that resembles a human being, but lacks just the thing that would make it actually so.

SANTA MONICA. 2260

OPERATION: ANTHROPOID

HOT STUFF!

EVERYONE WANTS TO TAKE A BITE OUT OF OUR RUMP STEAK!

THE BEST CRAB LEGS IN TOWN!

HOOTERS

NO G-Ms! OUR GIRLS ARE THE REAL DEAL!

Words Richard Starkings

Art Axel Medellin

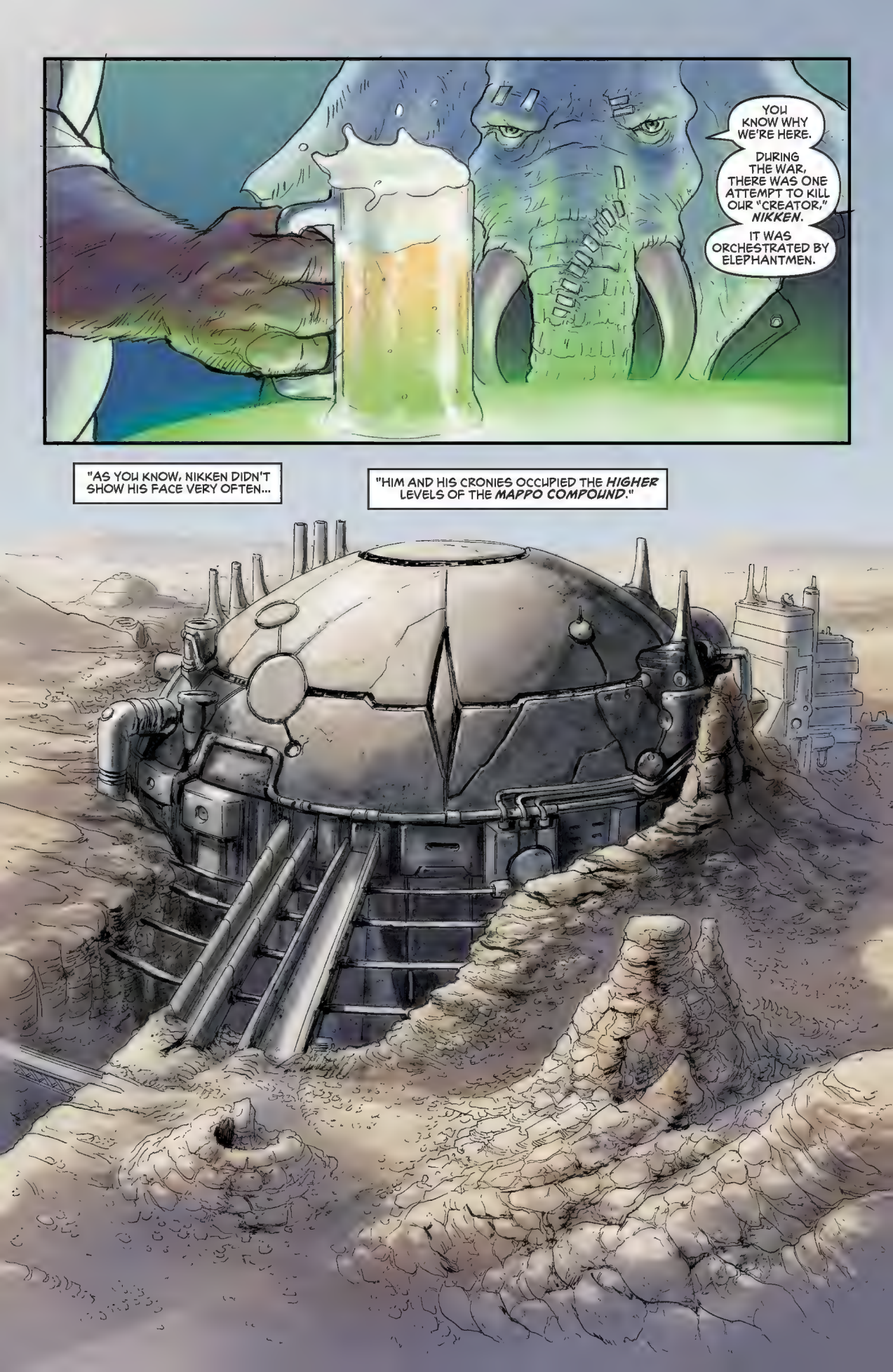
321

I BET YOU CAN HEAR REAL WELL BECAUSE YOUR EARS ARE SO *BIG*.

RIGHT?

WHAT? BEAT IT, KID.
DINT YER MOTHER TELLYA NOT TO TALK TO MUNTS?
THEY'RE ALL WAITING FOR YOU IN THE HOLE.
ABOUT TIME. LET'S GO.
YA KNOW, I HEARD THAT THEY KILLED SOME OF THE YOUNGER TRANSGENICS WHEN THEY SHUT MAPPO DOWN.
THEY SHOULD DO THAT WITH THE HUMAN CHILDREN.
THEY DON'T SEEM TO LIKE THEM TOO MUCH IN THIS TOWN ANYWAY.

I THINK THERE'S A *LAW* AGAINST KILLING CHILDREN.
YEAH, *HUMAN* LAWS. LAWS THAT DON'T PROTECT *US*.
FUCKERS.
SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO TAKE THE LAW INTO YOUR OWN HANDS.
ABOUT TIME YOU TURNED UP, STONE.


YOU KNOW WHY WE'RE HERE.
DURING THE WAR, THERE WAS ONE ATTEMPT TO KILL OUR "CREATOR," NIKKEN.
IT WAS ORCHESTRATED BY ELEPHANTMEN.
"AS YOU KNOW, NIKKEN DIDN'T SHOW HIS FACE VERY OFTEN...
"HIM AND HIS CRONIES OCCUPIED THE HIGHER LEVELS OF THE MAPPO COMPOUND."

"MAPPO'S SCIENTIFIC ELITE *INTERIOR GUARD* KEPT NIKKEN AND HIS ASSOCIATES *SAFE* FROM ANY ACTIONS BY EITHER THE ELEPHANTMEN THEMSELVES OR ANY *INFILTRATORS* FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
"SO, IF ANYONE WANTED TO *KILL NIKKEN*, THEY'D HAVE TO GET PAST THIS INNER GUARD.
"AND TO STRIKE AT THE *HEART* OF THAT GUARD, THEY'D HAVE TO GET TO ITS LEADER, *KEIDER*.
THIS IS THE VOICE OF NIKKEN... REMEMBER, MAN IS YOUR ENEMY; THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE IS KILL OR BE KILLED...
I FOR ONE AM *TIRED* OF HEARING THE VOICE OF *NIKKEN EVERY DAY* IN MY HEAD!
YOU ARE *NOT* GOD'S CHILDREN! GOD MADE YOU *WEAKER* THAN MAN! *MAPPO* MADE YOU *STRONG*! YOU WILL DEFEND MAPPO TO YOUR *LAST BREATH*!
IF MAN IS OUR ENEMY, THEN NIKKEN IS OUR ENEMY! *HE'S* A MAN, ISN'T HE?

ONE THING IS TRUE, WE ARE STRONGER THEN THEY ARE.
I SAY WE TAKE OUT NIKKEN. GET OUR FREEDOM.
RAVON, YOU'VE BEEN SPENDING WAY TOO MUCH TIME LISTENING TO KUBEC.
AND HOW DO YOU SUPPOSE WE GET NIKKEN?
WE BARELY SEE HIM AS IT IS!
KEIDER.
HE'S NIKKEN'S EYES AND EARS ON ALL TRANSGENICS.
WE TAKE KEIDER HOSTAGE.
AND WE GET KEIDER TO TAKE US TO NIKKEN.
"NOT THE MOST WELL THOUGHT OUT PLAN...
"BUT, SOMEHOW THEY GOT ACCESS TO GUNS AND AMMO...

"THEY STAGED A FIGHT IN TRAINING ROOM FOUR...
"OF COURSE, THE GUARDS TRIED TO BREAK IT UP...
"THEY WEREN'T EXPECTING ANY KIND OF AMBUSH...
"RAVON DEMANDED TO SEE KEIDER, OR THEY'D KILL THE HOSTAGES.
"KEIDER EVENTUALLY APPEARED...

"HE HELD RAVON'S GAZE FOR TEN SECONDS...
"AND ORDERED THE ROOM TO BE FILLED WITH LETHAL GAS."
NO ONE CAME OUT ALIVE.
NO ONE ATTEMPTED SUCH AN ACTION EVER AGAIN.
AND HERE WE ARE *YEARS* LATER, *FREE* ELEPHANTMEN...
AND NIKKEN IS *STILL* ALIVE!
WHERE? WHERE *IS* HE?

"HERE *IN CALIFORNIA*, IN THE MOJAVE DESERT. A MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON."
MAXIMUM SECURITY? SO HOW THE HELL ARE WE GOING TO GET *IN* THERE?
SOUNDS LIKE A *SUICIDE MISSION* TO ME.
AND WHAT ABOUT WEAPONS?
I MEAN, WE'D HAVE TO BE *ARMED*, RIGHT?
"AFTER THAT WHOLE DEAL WITH THE *HYENA HYBRIDS*, SOME OF MY CONTACTS GOT TO THE BODIES BEFORE THE AUTHORITIES. WE HAVE ENOUGH WEAPONS FOR *A SMALL ARMY*.

"AND WE FOUND SOMETHING ELSE, IN THE WRECKAGE OF THE SHIPS THAT BROUGHT THOSE *DOGS* DOWN TO THE CITY...
"*TANKS*. TOTALLY INTACT, LOADED WITH FIREPOWER AND SURFACE-TO-AIR *MISSILES*.
"WITH THE CITY *EVACUATED*, WE SIMPLY DROVE THEM AWAY.

"DEVLIN WORKS IN TRUCKING. HE GOT THE TANKS LOADED UP ON A JUGGERNAUT.
"THEY'RE ALREADY IN THE DESERT. WE SHIPPED THEM OUT TO VEGAS. THEY'RE WAITING FOR US."
WAITING FOR US TO DO *WHAT?*
WHAT DO YOU *THINK?*
WE'RE GOING TO KILL NIKKEN.
BLOW THAT WHOLE PLACE *SKY HIGH.*

CHOKER'S RIGHT. THIS IS A SUICIDE MISSION.
NIKKEN'S LOCKED UP, THERE'S NO POINT IN EVEN TRYING TO KILL HIM.
THEY'RE NOT GOING TO LET HIM OUT UNTIL HE'S DEAD, AND MAYBE NOT EVEN THEN.
ANYONE ELSE WANT TO CHICKEN OUT?
YEAH, SCREW YOU, STONE.
GIVE US A REASON TO BELIEVE THIS IS EVEN REMOTELY POSSIBLE.
HERE'S ONE THING I DIDN'T MENTION ABOUT THE ATTEMPT ON NIKKEN'S LIFE BACK IN THE DAY.
"RAVON WASN'T AFRAID OF THE PROSPECT OF FAILURE.

"IN FACT, RAVON WAS PREPARED FOR IT."
DEATH TO NIKKEN!
"KEIDER WAS NOT.
"THEY DIDN'T KILL NIKKEN, BUT THEY TOOK OUT HIS CHIEF OF SECURITY.
"YEAH. THEY ALL DIED, BUT THEY STRUCK A BLOW AGAINST THEIR CREATORS. THE ONLY SUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON NIKKEN AND HIS CRONIES BY THE ELEPHANTMEN THEMSELVES."
THEY TIGHTENED UP SECURITY AND KILLED ANY OTHER TRANSGENIC WHO SHOWED EVEN A FLUTTER OF INSUBORDINATION.
BUT RAVON AND THOSE OTHER MUNTS WERE HEROES.
WE SHOULDN'T BE SITTING ON OUR ASSES AFTER THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES.
WHAT'S YOUR ENDGAME IF WE BLOW UP THE PRISON AND NIKKEN GETS AWAY WITH HIS LIFE?

"WE SEND IN THE FIRST TANK, OPERATED BY REMOTE AND PACKED WITH EXPLOSIVES, TO THE EAST SIDE OF THE PRISON...
"IT DOESN'T MATTER IF WE KILL NIKKEN RIGHT THEN OR NOT..."
WHAT WILL BE THE FIRST THING THEY DO WITH HIM IF HE'S STILL *ALIVE?*
THEY'LL AIRLIFT HIM *OUT* OF THERE...

"EXACTLY. THERE ARE HELIPADS TO THE WEST SIDE OF THE PRISON... THEY'LL HAVE HIM ON A CHOPPER WITHIN MINUTES...
"WE'LL BE IN THE SECOND TANK, READY AND WAITING...
"AND NIKKEN WILL HAVE BREATHED HIS LAST..."
BOOM!

HRMPH
doop
boop
doop
doop
HEY, IT'S ME.
YOU WERE RIGHT, STONE IS -- STONE IS... PLANNING ON TAKING OUT... NIKKEN.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YEAH, I -- UHHHH
URRKK
SPLTACH!

I'M IN. WE ARE THE REAL PRISONERS HERE. THIS ISN'T ABOUT KILLING NIKKEN.
THIS IS ABOUT SHOWING THE BLEEDING HEARTS THAT KEEP US "FREE" THAT WE ARE NOT TO BE IGNORED.
OH, YOU WANT THEIR ATTENTION?
YOU DON'T THINK THIS IS GOING TO...
:CAFF:
STONE, WHAT -- WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN GIVING US TO DRINK?
CHOKER, I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT YOU OF ALL THE SCUM THAT DRINK IN THIS HOLE WOULD...
BROUAGH!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, STONE?
I DIDN'T BUY THE DRINKS... I THOUGHT -- THOUGHT YOU HAD A TAB.

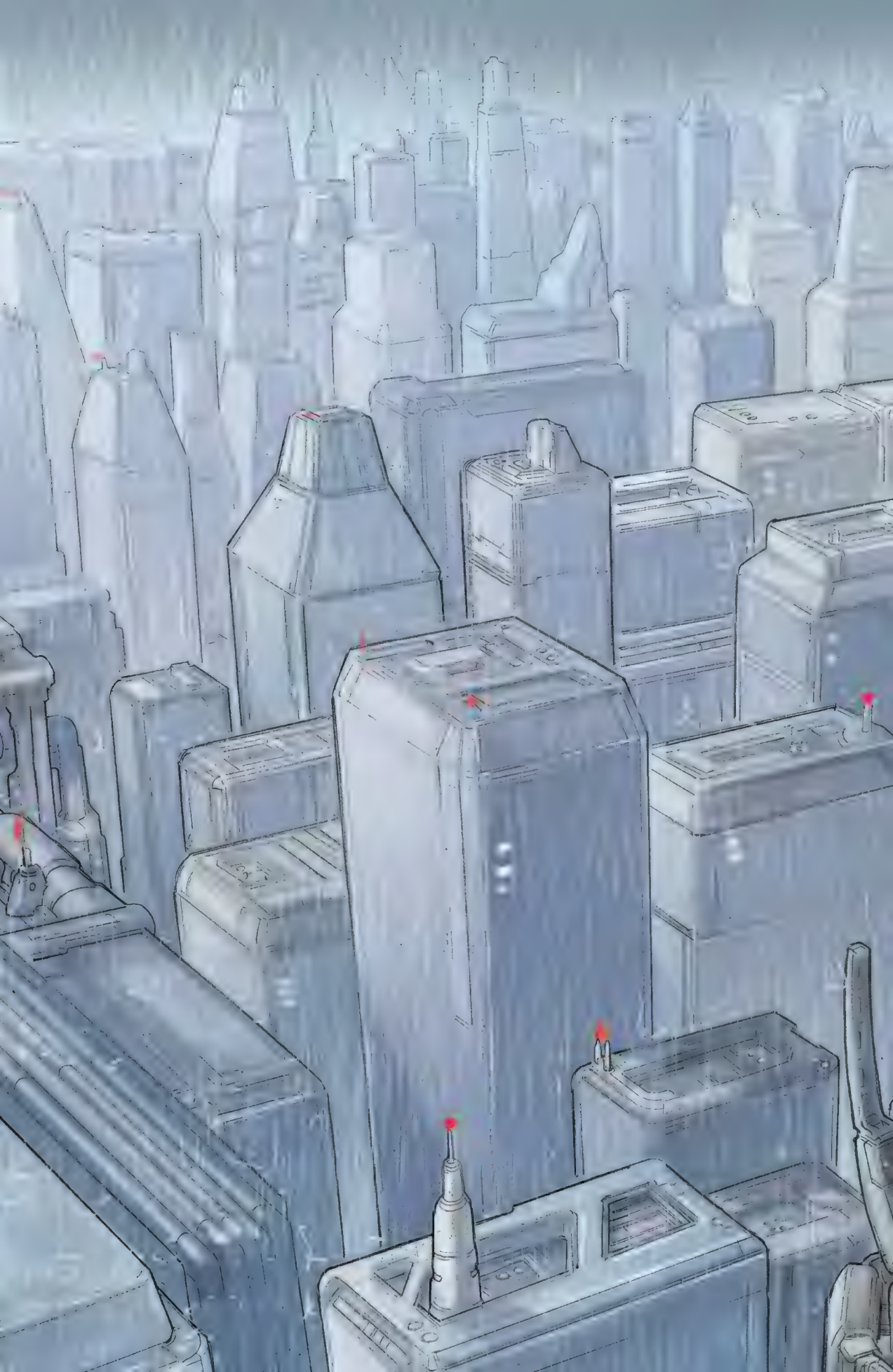
WHAT--?!
LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE ALL HAD ENOUGH.
YES, I THINK YOU'RE *RIGHT*.
PURCHASE?! UHHHHH...
HORN'S ERRAND BOY...
BUT WHY... WHAT...
DO YOU REALLY THINK A BUNCH OF *WASHED-UP LOSERS* COULD STAGE AN EFFECTIVE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON NIKKEN?
LOSERS...?

I COULD CRUSH YOU LIKE A CORN NUT.
I'M SURE YOU COULD.
YOU MIGHT BE THE STRONGEST OF YOUR MOTLEY GROUP...
WELL DONE.
YOU ARE THE *LAST* TO DIE.
YOU HAD AN *INTERESTING* PLAN.
BUT IT DEPENDED TOO MUCH ON TIMING AND LUCK. TOO MANY VARIABLES.
OBADIAH HORN WANTS NIKKEN DEAD TOO.
BUT HE INTENDS TO BE ***PRESENT*** AT THE ***EXECUTION.***

CALL THIS IN.
LET THE AUTHORITIES FIGURE OUT WHAT KILLED THEM.
LET THEM DISPOSE OF THE CORPSES.
THEY'LL FIND NOTHING.
YOU SAW NOTHING.
I'VE SEEN SO MANY DEAD MUNTS IN MY DAY, THESE THREE BARELY MAKE AN IMPRESSION.
YES, BUT REMEMBER, NO ONE WILL MISS ANOTHER.
HEY, PAL, ARE YOU--?

IVORY TOWERS
OPERATION ANTHROPOID?

YES, IT HAS A CERTAIN *HISTORICAL* SIGNIFICANCE.
"*ANTHROPOID.*" IT MEANS, "*ALMOST HUMAN.*"
AND YET, *LACKING.*
THE OPERATION IS TO *EXTRACT* NIKKEN.
AND BRING HIM TO ME.
I DON'T THINK THAT WILL BE A PROBLEM.



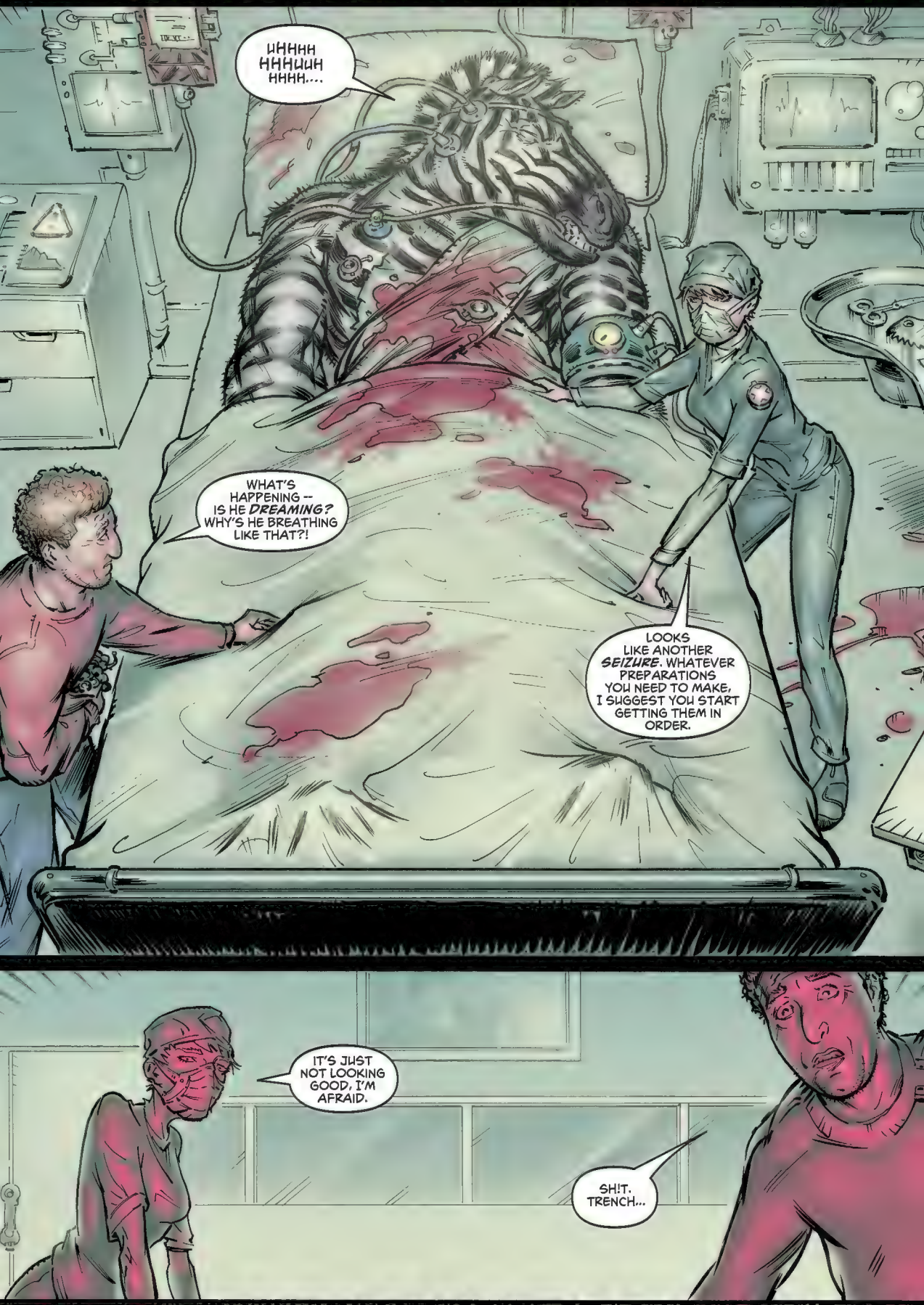
6
TRENCH

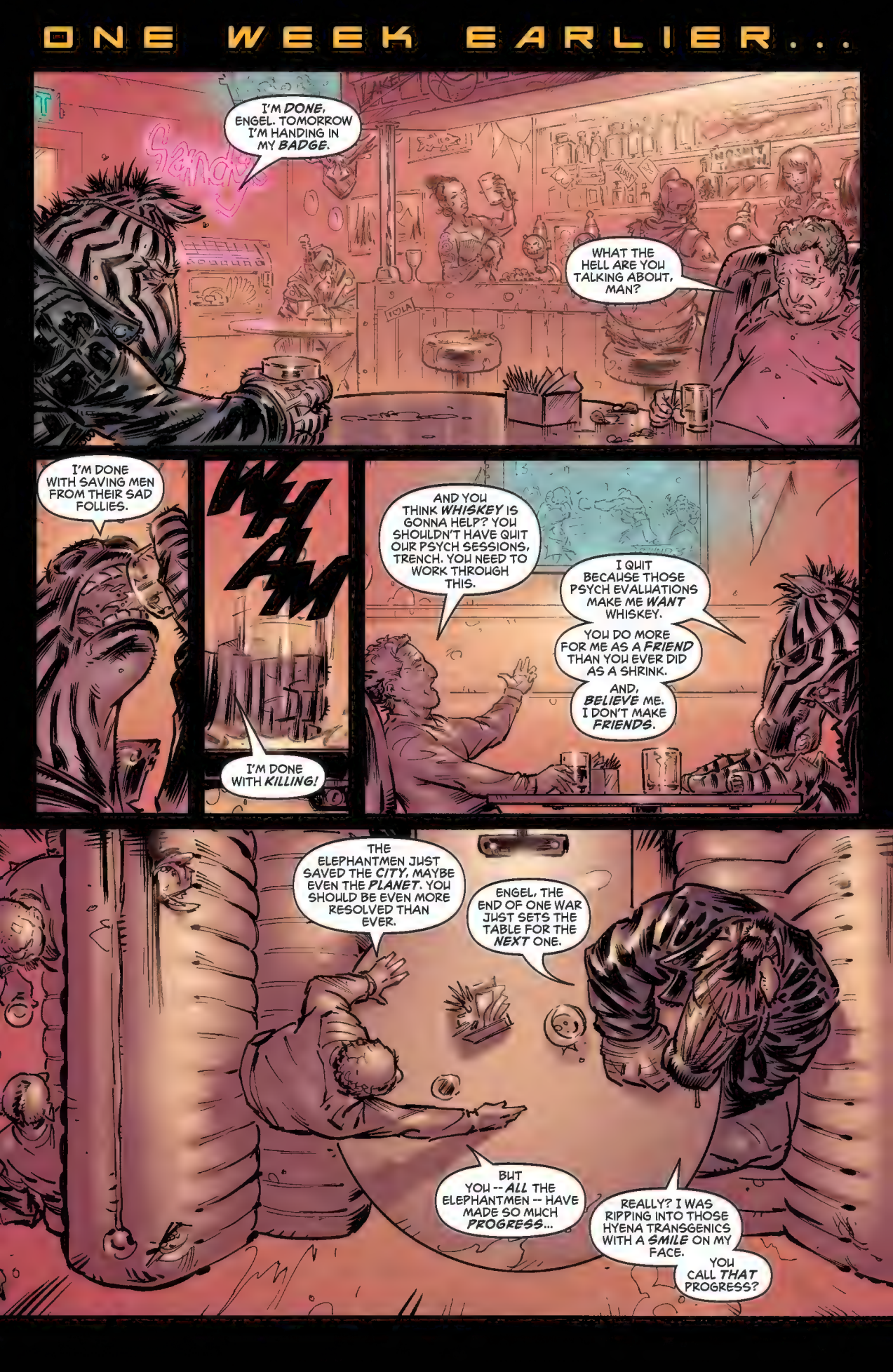
EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY EYE AT NIGHT.
SAME DREAM. GUARANTEED.
A BRIGHT LIGHT...
AND THEN...

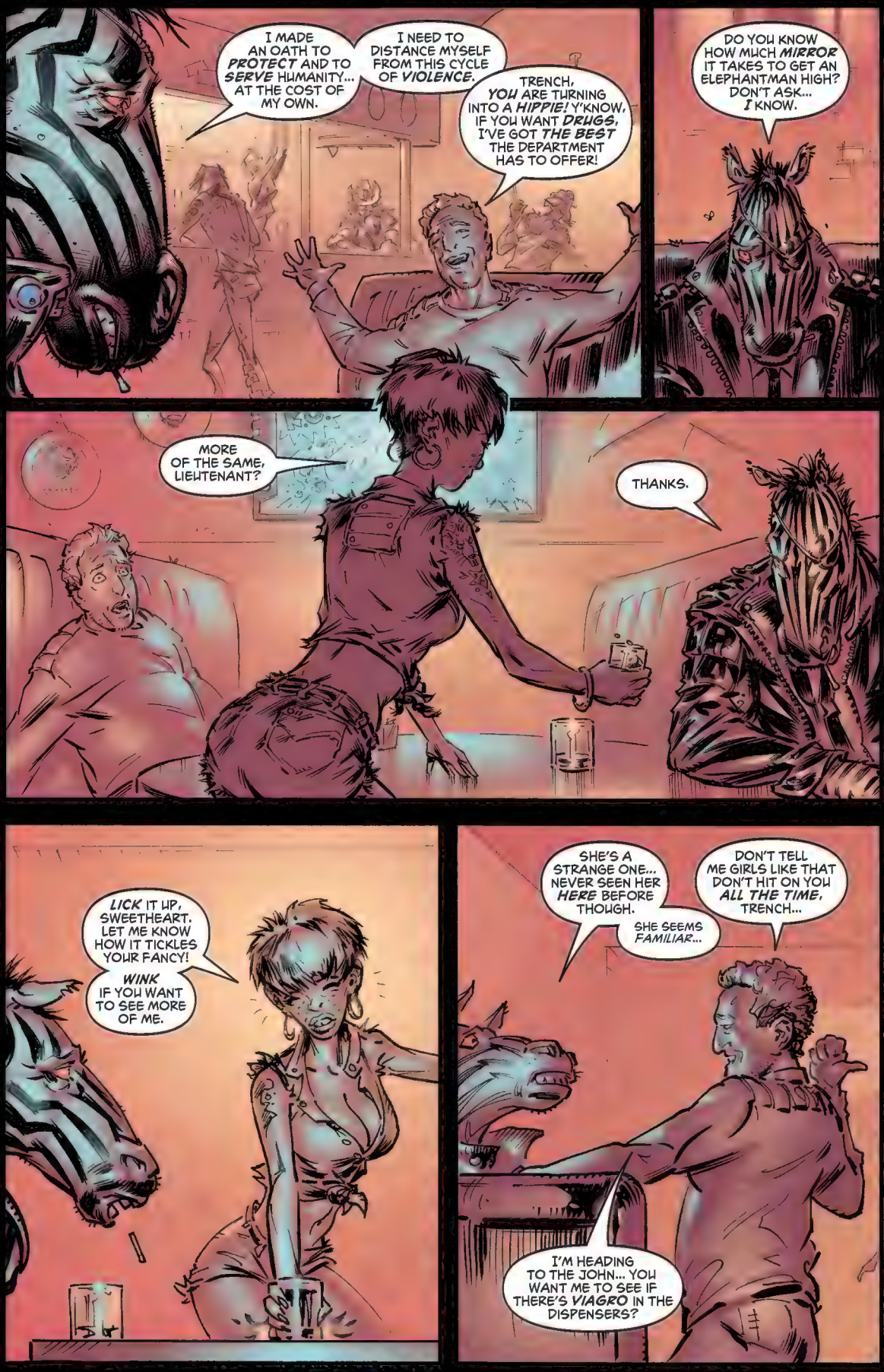
ELEPHANTMEN

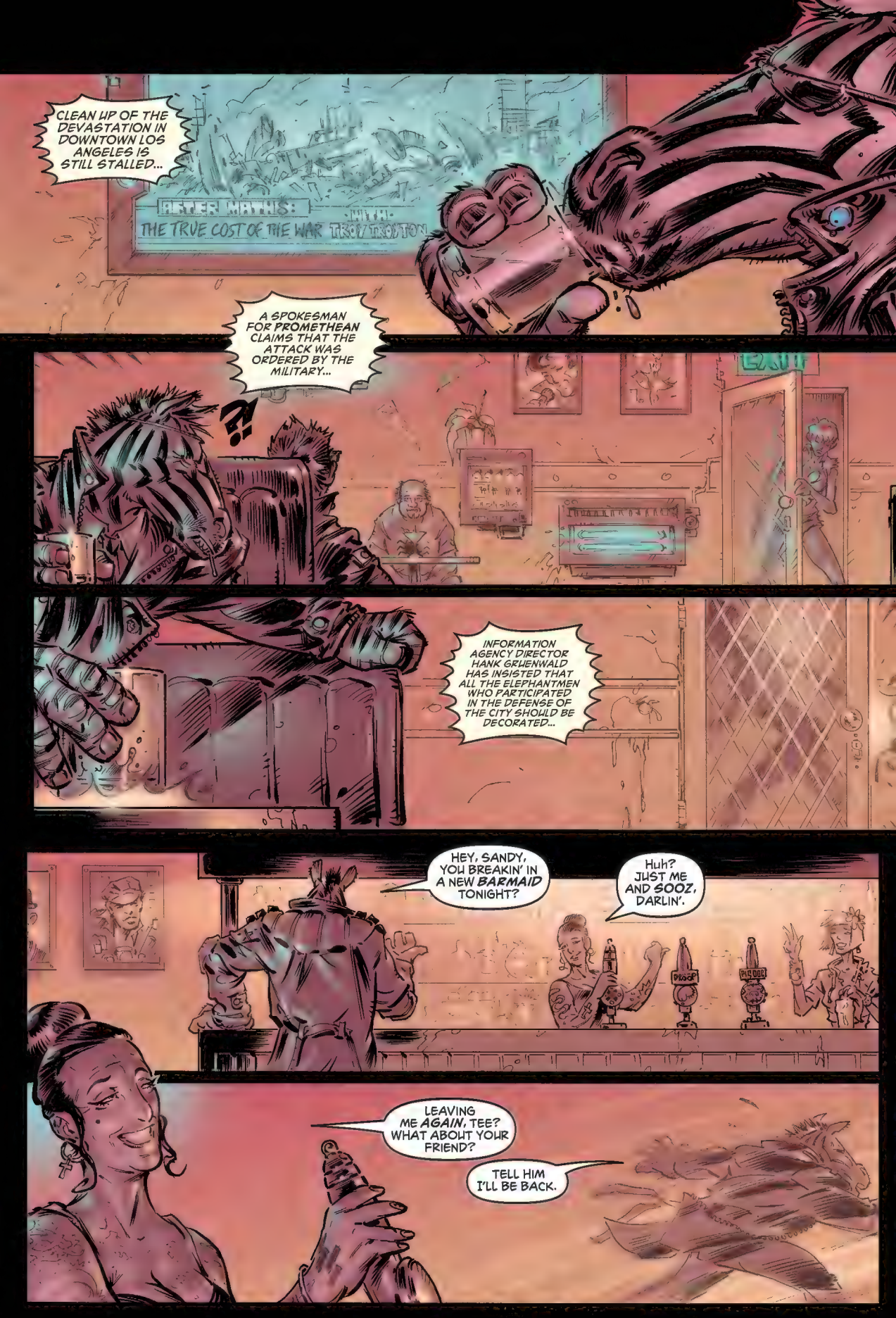
UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL 4: SPIKED!

By Boo Cook with Richard Starkings


UHHHH HHHUUH HHHH....
WHAT'S HAPPENING -- IS HE *DREAMING?* WHY'S HE BREATHING LIKE THAT?!
LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER *SEIZURE*. WHATEVER PREPARATIONS YOU NEED TO MAKE, I SUGGEST YOU START GETTING THEM IN ORDER.
IT'S JUST NOT LOOKING GOOD, I'M AFRAID.
SH!T. TRENCH...

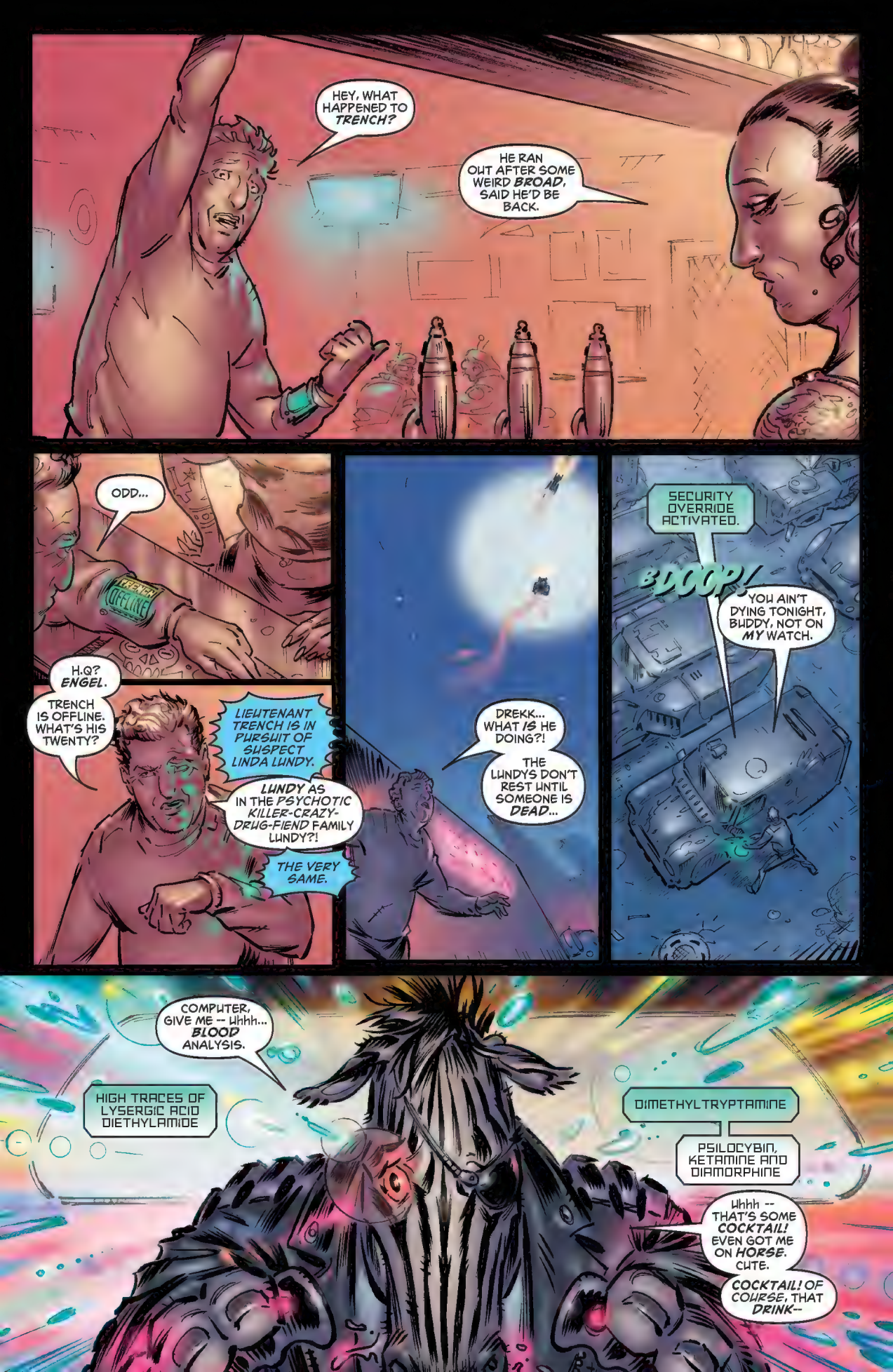

ONE WEEK EARLIER...
I'M DONE, ENGEL. TOMORROW I'M HANDING IN MY BADGE.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MAN?
I'M DONE WITH SAVING MEN FROM THEIR SAD FOLLIES.
WHAM
I'M DONE WITH KILLING!
AND YOU THINK WHISKEY IS GONNA HELP? YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE QUIT OUR PSYCH SESSIONS, TRENCH. YOU NEED TO WORK THROUGH THIS.
I QUIT BECAUSE THOSE PSYCH EVALUATIONS MAKE ME WANT WHISKEY.
YOU DO MORE FOR ME AS A FRIEND THAN YOU EVER DID AS A SHRINK.
AND, BELIEVE ME. I DON'T MAKE FRIENDS.
THE ELEPHANTMEN JUST SAVED THE CITY, MAYBE EVEN THE PLANET. YOU SHOULD BE EVEN MORE RESOLVED THAN EVER.
ENGEL, THE END OF ONE WAR JUST SETS THE TABLE FOR THE NEXT ONE.
BUT YOU -- ALL THE ELEPHANTMEN -- HAVE MADE SO MUCH PROGRESS...
REALLY? I WAS RIPPING INTO THOSE HYENA TRANSGENICS WITH A SMILE ON MY FACE.
YOU CALL THAT PROGRESS?


I MADE AN OATH TO *PROTECT* AND TO *SERVE* HUMANITY... AT THE COST OF MY OWN.
I NEED TO DISTANCE MYSELF FROM THIS CYCLE OF *VIOLENCE*.
TRENCH, *YOU* ARE TURNING INTO A *HIPPIE!* Y'KNOW, IF YOU WANT *DRUGS*, I'VE GOT *THE BEST* THE DEPARTMENT HAS TO OFFER!
DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH *MIRROR* IT TAKES TO GET AN ELEPHANTMAN HIGH? DON'T ASK... *I* KNOW.
MORE OF THE SAME, LIEUTENANT?
THANKS.
LICK IT UP, SWEETHEART. LET ME KNOW HOW IT TICKLES YOUR FANCY!
WINK IF YOU WANT TO SEE MORE OF ME.
SHE'S A STRANGE ONE... NEVER SEEN HER *HERE* BEFORE THOUGH.
SHE SEEMS *FAMILIAR*...
DON'T TELL ME GIRLS LIKE THAT DON'T HIT ON YOU *ALL THE TIME*, TRENCH...
I'M HEADING TO THE JOHN... YOU WANT ME TO SEE IF THERE'S *VIAGRO* IN THE DISPENSERS?


CLEAN UP OF THE DEVASTATION IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES IS STILL STALLED...
AFTER MATHS:
THE TRUE COST OF THE WAR
A SPOKESMAN FOR PROMETHEAN CLAIMS THAT THE ATTACK WAS ORDERED BY THE MILITARY...
?!
EXIT
INFORMATION AGENCY DIRECTOR HANK GRUENWALD HAS INSISTED THAT ALL THE ELEPHANTMEN WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE DEFENSE OF THE CITY SHOULD BE DECORATED...
HEY, SANDY, YOU BREAKIN' IN A NEW BARMAID TONIGHT?
Huh? JUST ME AND SOOZ, DARLIN'.
PROOF
PROOF
LEAVING ME AGAIN, TEE? WHAT ABOUT YOUR FRIEND?
TELL HIM I'LL BE BACK.

HEY!
DO I KNOW YOU, LADY?
THAT GIRL LOOKS DAMN FAMILIAR...
COMPUTER, GET ME IN.
SECURITY OVERRIDE ACTIVATED.
BLOOP!
HQ -- GIVE ME A BACKGROUND CHECK ON BAXTER LUNDY, ICED HIM A YEAR OR SO BACK FOR RESISTING ARREST.
NARCOTICS BUST. ANY NEXT OF KIN?

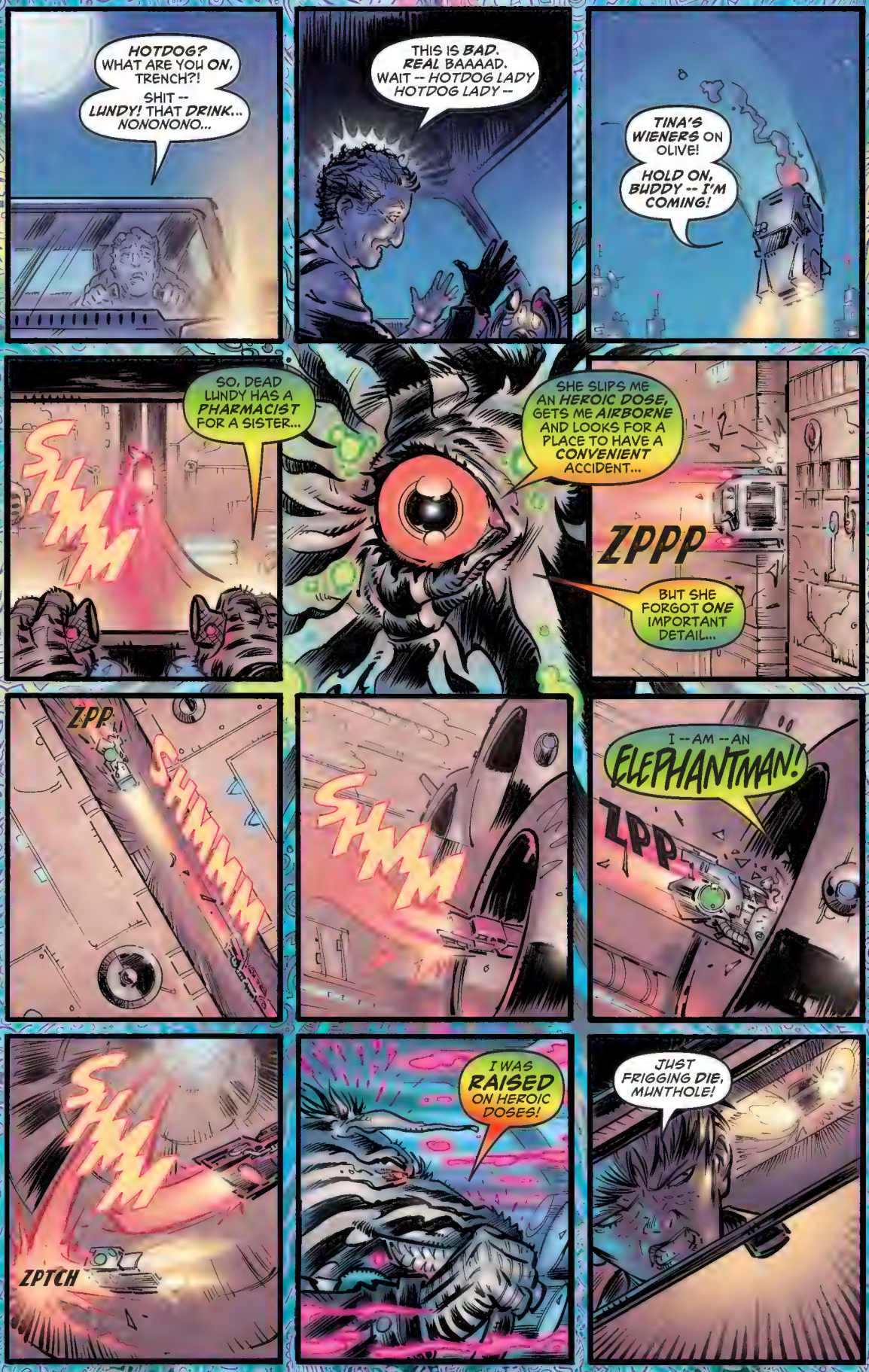
THAT'S AN AFFIRMATIVE, LIEUTENANT TRENCH... LINDA LUNDY. HIS TWIN SISTER.
ROGER THAT -- AM IN PURSUIT OF SUSPECT I BELIEVE TO BE HER.
ARE YOU REQUESTING BACKUP AT THIS TIME?
THAT'S A NEGATIVE, HQ...
I... WH...
Well, HELLO There!
I'm Mandy! Fly Me!
WHAT THE HELL--?!
SONUVVA...

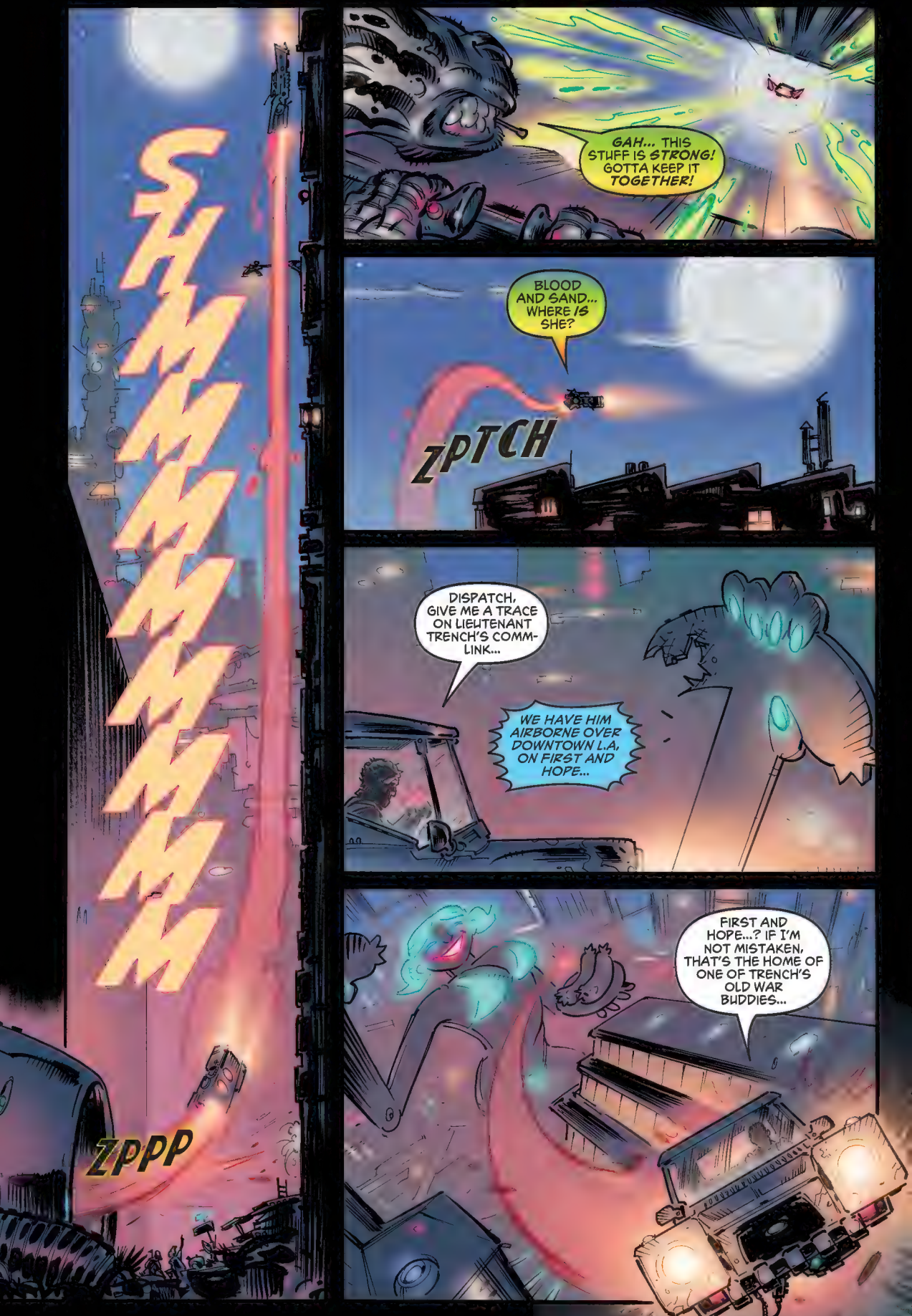

HEY, WHAT HAPPENED TO TRENCH?
HE RAN OUT AFTER SOME WEIRD BROAD, SAID HE'D BE BACK.
ODD...
TRENCH OFFLINE
H.Q? ENGEL.
TRENCH IS OFFLINE. WHAT'S HIS TWENTY?
LIEUTENANT TRENCH IS IN PURSUIT OF SUSPECT LINDA LUNDY.
LUNDY AS IN THE PSYCHOTIC KILLER-CRAZY-DRUG-FIEND FAMILY LUNDY?!
THE VERY SAME.
DREKK... WHAT IS HE DOING?!
THE LUNDYS DON'T REST UNTIL SOMEONE IS DEAD...
SECURITY OVERRIDE ACTIVATED.
BLOOP!
YOU AIN'T DYING TONIGHT, BUDDY, NOT ON MY WATCH.
COMPUTER, GIVE ME -- Uhhh... BLOOD ANALYSIS.
HIGH TRACES OF LYSERGIC ACID DIETHYLAMIDE
DIMETHYLTRYPTAMINE
PSILOCYBIN, KETAMINE AND DIAMORPHINE
Uhhh -- THAT'S SOME COCKTAIL! EVEN GOT ME ON HORSE. CUTE.
COCKTAIL! OF COURSE, THAT DRINK--

SPIKED!
THAT'S RIGHT!
ENJOY YOUR TRIP, MUNT!
YOU'RE ON THE FAST TRACK TO HELL...
ALL THOSE UPPERS...
BUT YOU'RE GOIN' DOWN!
WARNING: BUSINESS DISTRICT
MAXIMUM SPEED EXCEEDED
FAST AND HIGH... YOU GOT THAT RIGHT!
NNNH!
NEED TO GET OFF -- GET OFF THIS ROLLER COASTER...
COMPUTER, PATCH ME IN TO ENGEL...

DAMMIT, TRENCH -- WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?!
ENGELLLL
WOAH!
GIANT HOTDOG LADY -- DON'T CRUSH ME! I LOVE YOOOOH!

SMASH


HOTDOG? WHAT ARE YOU ON, TRENCH?!
SHIT -- LUNDY! THAT DRINK... NONONONO...
THIS IS BAD. REAL BAAAAD. WAIT -- HOTDOG LADY HOTDOG LADY --
TINA'S WIENERS ON OLIVE!
HOLD ON, BUDDY -- I'M COMING!
SO, DEAD LUNDY HAS A PHARMACIST FOR A SISTER...
SHMMM
SHE SLIPS ME AN HEROIC DOSE, GETS ME AIRBORNE AND LOOKS FOR A PLACE TO HAVE A CONVENIENT ACCIDENT...
ZPPP
BUT SHE FORGOT ONE IMPORTANT DETAIL...
ZPP
SHMMM
SHMM
I -- AM -- AN ELEPHANTMAN!
ZPP
SHMM
ZPTCH
I WAS RAISED ON HEROIC DOSES!
JUST FRIGGING DIE, MUNTHOLE!


GAH... THIS STUFF IS STRONG! GOTTA KEEP IT TOGETHER!
BLOOD AND SAND... WHERE IS SHE?
ZPTCH
DISPATCH, GIVE ME A TRACE ON LIEUTENANT TRENCH'S COMM-LINK...
WE HAVE HIM AIRBORNE OVER DOWNTOWN L.A, ON FIRST AND HOPE...
FIRST AND HOPE...? IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, THAT'S THE HOME OF ONE OF TRENCH'S OLD WAR BUDDIES...
SHHHHHHH
ZPPP

CAN'T *BREATHE*... GOTTA GET SOME AIR...

HEAD, FEELS LIKE IT'S GONNA *EXPLODE*...

TRENCH, THIS IS ENGEL... HEADING FOR YOUR TWENTY! HANG ON IN THERE, BUD.

ENGEL... I'M... UP HIGH...

THE DISTANCE -- BETWEEN MY *SELF* AND THE REST OF THE UNIVERSE IS LESS THAN *ZERO*...

"I -- I'M A... HOVERING MIND..."

MY BODY IS GONE

I SEE MY THOUGHTS WRITTEN IN TINY BOXES

"SENSES CLOSING DOWN..."

TOO MUCH

"IT'S TOO *BRIGHT*, ENGEL!"

THROW IN MY BADGE

"SENSES CLOSING DOWN..."

THROW IN THE TOWEL

I AM PURE EXISTENCE

LIVING ENERGY

I AM HOME

EXPERIENCING MYSELF ERASING MY SELF

TABULA RASA

LIMINAL

NOMINAL

NONIMAL

NON ANIMAL

ANiMA

ANiMA MiA

"AM i... I?"

"MY I..."

I MISS MY FUCKING EYE!

EYE!

You only need One Eye to see The Truth.

EYE!!!!!!

EYE!!!!!

EYE!!!

Despite your Asymmetry, Trench, you are Perfectly Balanced: Black and White in Perfect Harmony. A Bright Half Moon neither Waxing nor Waning...

I can show you Neon Light Fields Blazing at the End of Infinity, Pan-dimensional Entities weaving Reality beyond the Multiverse.

But What Use is such Celestial Grandeur?

What does it Mean to You? You Wonder if there is a Point to Your Creation...

The Point is the Spire of a Treasure Tower! Its Foundation is the Sum of your Actions leading to your Ultimate Goal.

The Treasure Tower is a Perfect Unity of both Right and Wrong, and can only be completed by Driving Home the Spike of the One True Teaching.

THE SPIRE

THE SPIKE

Without Truth, the Treasure Tower of Your Life is but a Pillar of Salt waiting to crumble.

FIRST AND HOPE, TRENCH... I'M HERE... WHERE ARE YOU?

Nathaniel Trench... What Are You?

Are You a White Zebra with Black Stripes...?

...or a Black Zebra with White Stripes?

A Zebra with Human Genes...

...or a Human with Zebra Genes?

So Many have Died... Were they your Blood, or just blood to be Spilled?

NO!

IT ISN'T ABOUT HOW OR WHY I WAS MADE...

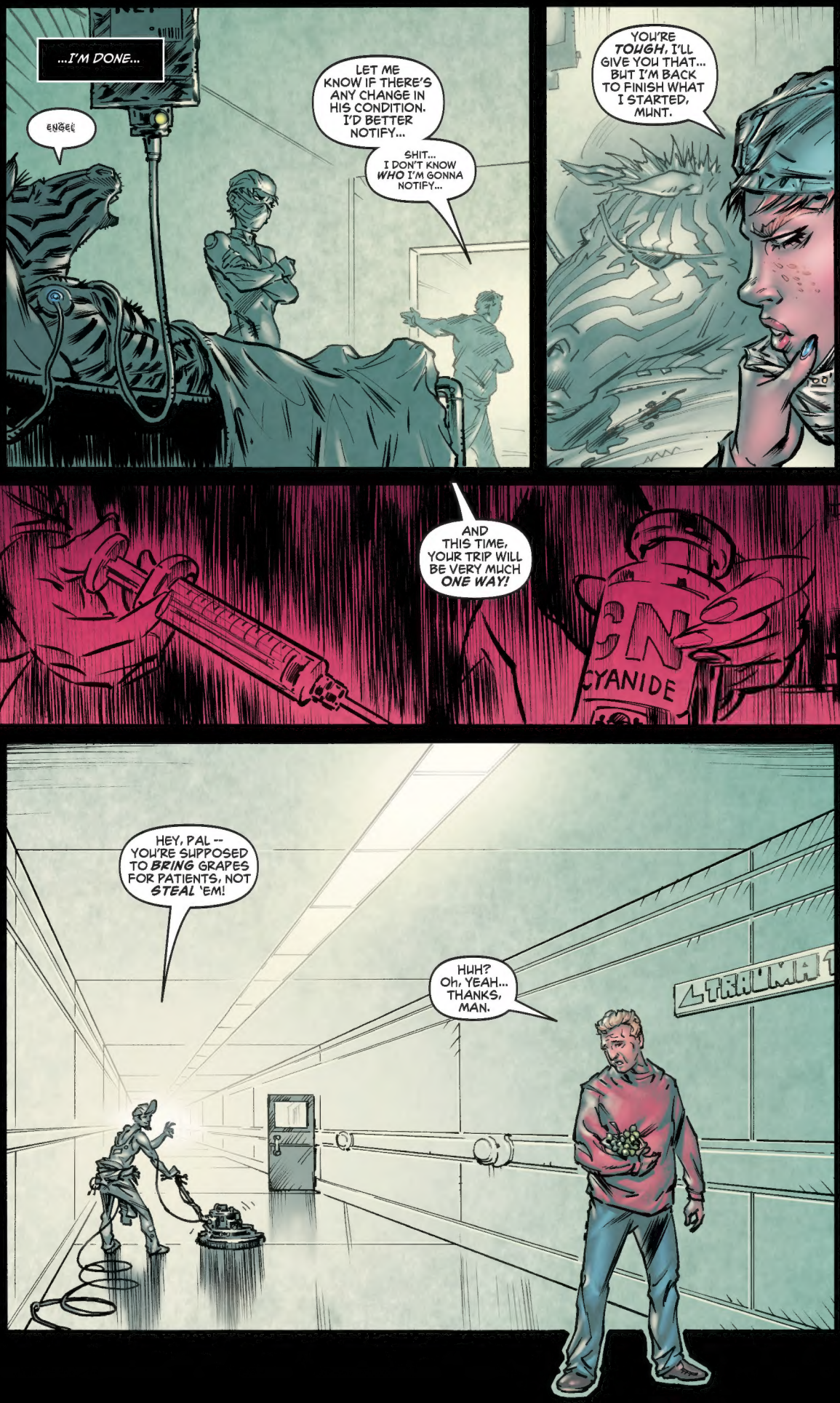
IT'S ABOUT LIVING WITH HONOR! WITH DIGNITY!

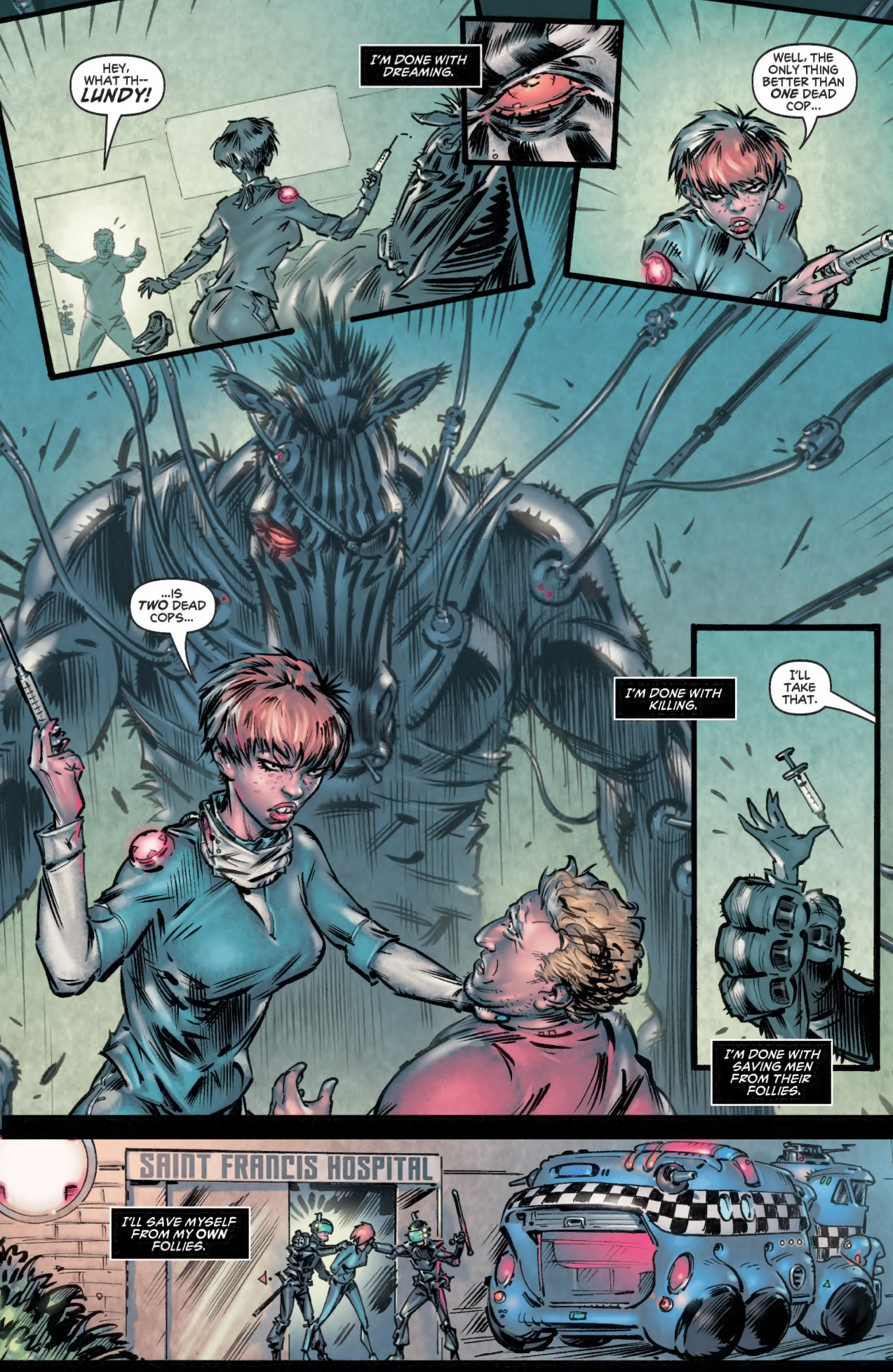
I'M NOT FIGHTING MYSELF...

I ONLY NEED ONE EYE...

...TO SEE THE TRUTH!
THIS IS FOR MY BROTHER, YOU LOATHSOME MUTANT!
NO... WAIT...
...I GET IT...
KLUNCH
IT HITS ME RIGHT BETWEEN THE "I"S...
ALL HE EVER DID WAS GET PEOPLE HIGH...
WELL, GUESS WHAT...
NOW YOU COULDN'T BE HIGHER!
...FINALLY...
UH, CONTROL, I FOUND TRENCH!
WE NEED A MED WAGON AT HOPE AND FIRST AS FAST AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE!

I GET THE POINT.
I'M DONE...


...I'M DONE...
ENGEL
LET ME KNOW IF THERE'S ANY CHANGE IN HIS CONDITION. I'D BETTER NOTIFY...
SHIT... I DON'T KNOW WHO I'M GONNA NOTIFY...
YOU'RE TOUGH, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT... BUT I'M BACK TO FINISH WHAT I STARTED, MUNT.
AND THIS TIME, YOUR TRIP WILL BE VERY MUCH ONE WAY!
CN
CYANIDE
HEY, PAL -- YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BRING GRAPES FOR PATIENTS, NOT STEAL 'EM!
HUH? Oh, YEAH... THANKS, MAN.


HEY, WHAT TH-- LUNDY!
I'M DONE WITH DREAMING.
WELL, THE ONLY THING BETTER THAN ONE DEAD COP...
...IS TWO DEAD COPS...
I'M DONE WITH KILLING.
I'LL TAKE THAT.
I'M DONE WITH SAVING MEN FROM THEIR FOLLIES.
SAINT FRANCIS HOSPITAL
I'LL SAVE MYSELF FROM MY OWN FOLLIES.

EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY EYE AT NIGHT.
SAME DREAM. GUARANTEED.
FRANCIS HOSPITAL
A BRIGHT LIGHT...
BUT GLOWING SOFTER BY EACH MOMENT.
THE LIGHT IS A PERFECT UNITY OF RIGHT AND WRONG
AND I WAKE UP CONTENT.

"AN IMAGE OF THE FUTURE HALFWAY BETWEEN THE AKIRA OF KATSUHIRO OTOMO AND THE BLADE RUNNER OF RIDLEY SCOTT; A FUTURE WHERE IT RAINS ON NEON LETTERS IN A DELUSIONAL MEGALOPOLIS. A TRUE SCIENCE FICTION NARRATIVE."
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THE BIG GLASGOW COMIC PAGE

★★★★★
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